

The Nation.

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EDITORIAL

TWO FACES OF THE POPE

There are two theories on the meaning and effect of Pope John Paul II's mission to Central America. The "wily Pope" hypothesis holds that the Bishop of Rome has effectively subverted the intention of the President of the United States to reverse the revolution in Nicaragua and destroy it in El Salvador.

According to this supple formulation, the Pope's very visit to Nicaragua put a protective halo around the Sandinist society, however critical were the visitor's words. As for El Salvador, John Paul paid homage at the burial site of Archbishop Romero, slain by butchers serving the right-wing regime; the Pope also called for an ambiguous "dialogue" between unnamed forces to bring about peace. By such acts, the wily Pontiff seemed to place his moral majesty in the way of the military solution the United States favors for that wretched land.

But the "wicked Pope" theory vies for equal attention. It contends that John Paul went to the isthmian hot spots to undermine the radical "people's church," whose liberationist theology—more than Marxism or nationalism—is the ideological spearhead of revolution in the region. The Pope scolded all sorts of people along his way—that, after all, is his magisterial right. But he reserved his sharpest scorn for those who are most vulnerable to his power: Rome's missionaries in the field.

Political revolution is not this Pope's biggest headache. He is troubled most by cracks in the authoritarian structure of the church he runs. The people's churches threaten the hierarchy's hegemony over the lives of its multitudes in the areas of family roles, personal autonomy, sexual freedom, work relationships. This is a cultural revolution of historic proportions, and the Pope may be expected to use both wily and wicked ways to beat it back.

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BEATING G.M. UNIONBUSTERS

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THE DECLINE AND FALL OF ANTITRUST

ROBERT SHERRILL

Does Ronald Reagan really love show business as much as he pretends? There is good reason to suspect that he doesn't, for he has done more than any other modern President to bring down the curtain on *Antitrust*, a tragicomedy in four acts (Sherman Act, Clayton Act, Robinson-Patman Act, Federal Trade Commission Act) that had been running in Washington to less than rave reviews since 1890.

The plot of *Antitrust* is simple: giant corporations team up to fix prices and otherwise cheat consumers; they use their extraordinary financial muscle to overwhelm, buy up and bully smaller companies in such a way as to reduce competition. They are the villains. The heroes are the Justice Department's antitrust division and the Federal Trade Commission, both of which have for generations been empowered to take the trust bullies into court and force them to stop restraining trade, suppressing competition and creating monopolies.

The trouble with the show was that the Justice Department and the F.T.C. seldom got their roles, or their lines, straight. And they usually performed with such lack of enthusiasm that, as Thurman Arnold pointed out long ago, the actual impact of the antitrust laws was "to promote the growth of great industrial organizations by deflecting the attack on them into purely moral and ceremonial channels."

Still, as a morality play, *Antitrust* had some usefulness. It kept the ideal of competition alive, however feebly. Now and then, the Justice Department and the F.T.C. actually whopped some corporation enough to embarrass it into taking

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LETTERS.

MOON OVER 'THE NATION'

Washington, D.C.

Christopher Hitchens's "Minority Report" [on the Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the New Right] in the January 22 issue is probably as good an example as any to explain why *The Nation* languishes in such a dismal swamp of irrelevance and insignificance. The piece is a goulash of inaccuracies, of leftovers and droppings of would-be muckrakers and of screeching stridency.

To take one example, among many, of Hitchens's flummery. He makes much of a report issued by the Ripon Society, a tiny political society (3,000 members) as irrelevant as *The Nation* itself. Indeed, Hitchens acknowledges a "debt" to the report issued by the aptly-named chairman of said sect, one Jim Leach. Hitchens makes no mention, however, of the fact that Leach's report was torn to shreds by reporters as soon as he unveiled it. I quote from U.P.I.'s account of the proceedings: "After two people from the audience rose to protest the articles' references to them or to their organizations, Leach conceded, 'The problems with this article are less-than-perfect research and less-than-perfect fact.'"

James R. Whelan
Editor and Publisher
The Washington Times

HITCHENS REPLIES

Washington, D.C.

I find James R. Whelan's vulgar, dismal letter rather encouraging. Foam as he may, he cannot point to any inaccuracy in my article. It is true that the Ripon Society could not prove its suspicion about Moonie funds circulating among college Republicans, but I did not make that allegation. Everything else was independently verified. I challenge Whelan or one of his gifted associates to disprove or deny any specific charge I made. Otherwise, his letter must be taken as representing the best he can do. Journalists on his "newspaper," some of whom have worked for the free press in the past, say that it's a tossup which they find most wearisome: the constant Moonie interference or the swinish illiteracy of the editor and publisher. I hope that I never need employment that badly.

Christopher Hitchens

THE W.P.C. AND PROVANCE

Philadelphia

I have followed with interest the stories and debates in *The Nation* over the involvement of the K.G.B. in the nuclear freeze campaign and my membership in the World Peace Council. After reading Frank Donner ["The Campaign to Smear the Nuclear Freeze Movement," Nov. 6, 1982], Rael Jean Isaac and John Rees ["Letters," Dec. 4, 1982, and

Feb. 12, respectively], I feel it is necessary for me to clarify.

As I have written to *Reader's Digest* and the World Peace Council, I am not, nor have I ever been, a member of the council. In September 1976, while coordinating the national campaign to stop the B-1 bomber, I was invited by the Campaign to Slash the Military Budget in New York City to attend a World Peace Council conference in Helsinki, Finland. I accepted the invitation as an individual, not as a member of any delegation. I observed the conference and made no presentations in the plenaries or commissions (though I was encouraged to do so). I accepted the invitation because I wanted to find out what the W.P.C. was about and because I wanted to meet people from the U.S.S.R. in order to discuss an exchange of citizens between the United States and the Soviet Union—an exchange that took place a few years later.

I was very surprised to learn later that I had been listed as a member of the W.P.C. in its 1977-80 membership booklet. I immediately wrote to the W.P.C. protesting its action and instructed the council to remove my name. I received no response, which I attributed to inefficient bureaucracy. But, in 1980, when I saw that my name was listed in the 1980-83 membership booklet—without any further involvement on my part with the W.P.C.—I was angry. I wrote another letter to the W.P.C. and one to the U.S. Peace Council explaining that I was not a member and again demanding the removal of my name. To this letter I received a reply, three years late, assuring me that the W.P.C. would remove my name from its membership scrolls.

At this point I am as critical of the World Peace Council for its opportunism and misrepresentation of fact as I am of *Reader's Digest* for not confirming with me information it acquired from the W.P.C. Indeed, it is a tragic disservice that the successful nuclear freeze campaign and the people associated with it are subjected to unfounded, misleading and misguided journalism that attempts to undermine the efforts for a comprehensive, bilateral weapons freeze.

Terry Provance

CENSORSHIP AND ASSASSINATION

Tucson, Ariz.

In an otherwise fair review of my book, *American Assassins: The Darker Side of Politics* ["Not So Crazy, After All," *The Nation*, Feb. 12], Clancy Sigal claims that I advocate media censorship as a means of reducing the probability of assassination attempts. That is not true. What I say in my book is this:

Tighter security would reduce the probability of assassinations as it has

in more authoritarian societies, but it is unlikely that political leaders, or the public, would be willing to make that kind of sacrifice. *To accept such restrictions on access and movement would violate a national conception of what politics and politicians should be in a free society.*

I conclude by saying that if such restrictions were imposed, it would amount to "a disheartening admission of what American society has become." James W. Clarke

MORE ON THE ADAMIC AFFAIR

Youngstown, Ohio

The Nation's brief homage to Louis Adamic ["The Adamic Affair," Nick Sivulich, Jan. 29] has been followed by the disclosure that the "Butcher of Lyons," Klaus Barbie, was in the pay of American intelligence agencies. The two stories are related.

Among the outrages committed against critical voices during the McCarthy era of anti-Communist repression, I have always considered the death of Louis Adamic especially outrageous.

I believed then and I believe today that Adamic died in 1951 because he knew too much about the shelter and employment given in the United States to refugee war criminals, especially Ustashi and other pro-Nazi killers from Yugoslavia.

I hope some author will undertake the task of writing a long-overdue book on Adamic's last days before the Freedom of Information Act is also destroyed.

Merlin J. Luce

DRAFT COMMANDO RON

New York City

Ronald Reagan's entire World War II military service was spent at the Hal Roach Studios in Culver City, California, with the Army Air Corps's First Motion Picture Unit, whose members were dubbed "Hollywood Commandos." As Casey Stengel said, "You could look it up."

With Reagan now seeking more advisers for the armed forces of the thuggish government of El Salvador, what would be more appropriate than for our Commander in Chief to resurrect his uniform from the mothballs and, in a stroke of genius, become the Number One adviser to his gung-ho Salvadoran buddies.

Sidney Rosenblatt

EMENDATION

We neglected to mention last week that Günter Grass's "Solidarity With the Sandinists" originally appeared in *Die Zeit* of October 1, 1982, and that Dr. Irmgard Elsner Hunt provided the translation for *The Nation*.

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EDITORIALS.

A Bit of Green

Human life on earth is threatened by nuclear war. The world economy may yet come to a stop. Tyrants, from Jaruzelski to Ríos Montt, bully their people. Yet the German Minister of the Interior, Frederich Zimmerman, is worried about whether the twenty-seven new Green Party deputies will wear jeans in the Bundestag.

Zimmerman's absurd attempt to impose a dress code is a caricature of the panicky reaction of the Western political elite to the Greens' breakthrough in the March 6 election.

Members of this elite can console themselves with the thought that the results could have been much worse for them. Suppose Hans-Jochen Vogel's Social Democrats, who insisted that the United States conduct serious arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union, had won? On a weekend when the latest Harris poll reported that 57 percent of Americans wanted to dismiss him, President Reagan seized on Helmut Kohl's victory as a foreign policy triumph.

But the Administration's initial euphoria dissipated when it realized that domestic issues rather than missiles dominated the decisive final stages of the campaign. As the likelihood of a Kohl victory increased, some conservatives switched to the Free Democrats and their leader, Foreign Minister

Hans-Dietrich Genscher, to prevent the mad Bavarian, Franz-Josef Strauss, from inheriting the foreign affairs post. Similarly, when their party's defeat seemed assured, many Social Democrats decided to vote for the Green candidates, giving that party the 5 percent of the vote necessary for representation in Parliament.

The Christian Democrats were able to pin the blame for Germany's economic woes on the Social Democrats. The German business community injected huge sums of money into the election, and its threats of an investment strike made many workers fearful that unemployment—now 11 percent—would rise further if the Social Democrats won. The S.P.D., however, had no convincing economic plan to offer, and after thirteen years of centrist government it could not credibly move left.

The party was also hurt by foreign intervention—not the Reagan Administration's hostility, which it expected, but the backlash triggered by its overeager embrace of the Soviet Union. Perhaps the most injurious intervention of all was a statement by French President François Mitterrand during his visit to Bonn. Just when Vogel was trying to define a new geopolitical role for Germany ("The United States is our ally but the U.S.S.R. is our neighbor"), Mitterrand advised the Germans to stick with the Atlantic alliance. Mitterrand's remarks seemed to second Kohl's warning that Germany would be isolated in the West if the S.P.D. won. At any rate, not long after that, the polls showed that voter attention had shifted to domestic issues.

The Green Party's gains were the one bright spot in the elections. Now the antinuclear movement can make its protest in Parliament as well as on the streets. And the S.P.D. has been shown that its past neglect of issues raised by the Greens—environmental degradation, unplanned economic growth, technocratic domination—was a mistake.

The election results do not reflect a new German consensus. Instead they portend a profound cultural and political polarization. A struggle within the Social Democratic Party as it seeks to regain its socialist soul will be a necessary prelude to a greater struggle between a united left and a right that is poorly disguised as the center.

Sandersism in Vt.

Socialism was trampled in Germany and trounced in France two weeks ago, but it triumphed mightily in Burlington, Vermont. Mayor Bernie Sanders, whom the local newspapers like to call a "self-proclaimed socialist," won re-election over strong Republican and Democratic candidates. Two years ago, Sanders won the mayoralty by only ten votes; this time he received 53 percent of the vote in a three-way race. What's most remarkable about Sanders is not his political program—which is hardly radical in approach or effect—but his feat in bringing socialism into the mainstream of political discourse.

Commenting on the election, for example, the *Brattleboro Reformer*, one of the state's "major" newspapers

(nothing is really major in Vermont; Burlington, the metropolis, has only 37,727 inhabitants), apostrophized President Reagan:

The ultimate example of Vermont voluntarism, Mr. President, came in Burlington, where lots of people went voluntarily to the polls and rejected a Republican candidate for mayor. The good news, Mr. President, is that socialism is still alive and well in Burlington's City Hall.

That kind of editorializing from a member of the granitic establishment would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Even Sanders is bolder now. During his first campaign he refused to say whether he was a socialist: "Not relevant," he muttered to one interviewer. This time, he ran on effusively in a talk with the local U.P.I. political writer, Rod Clarke:

"I'm proud to be a socialist," Sanders said. "But does that mean we end up nationalizing everything, and government should run every small business? Obviously, and of course, not. But no one who knows anything about economics thinks that we do live in a free enterprise society. If you think the word 'socialism' is not more than symbolic, though, you're very wrong, because I say working people should be running this country rather than zillionaires. I have a different vision; I believe in a different power alignment. What I'm saying is, the world has got to change, and I have no illusion I can do it here in Burlington altogether."

What the "Sandersistas" have brought to Burlington is good government and political reform. Sanders restructured the city's finances and saved so much money he could hold the line on taxes, upgrade services and give city workers a beneficent contract. He stopped condominium development on Lake Champlain and began planning for the shoreline's public use. He organized neighborhood assemblies and opened the government to women, the elderly, young people and artists. He established a venture capital fund for small local enterprises. Voter participation has doubled since the last Democratic administration.

Before World War I, socialists controlled more than a hundred American cities. These "sewer socialists" were leaders in municipal reform. In time, the sewer socialists were absorbed into middle-class liberal politics. The left drifted away. Now Sanders seems to be bringing the radicals and the sewer socialists together again. It's only one city, but it's an attractive model if anyone wants to imitate it.

Seniority Rights

The Supreme Court must soon decide on one of the most explosive affirmative-action controversies to come before it. The case, *Boston Firefighters Union v. Boston Chapter, N.A.A.C.P.*, pits seniority rights against efforts to remedy past discrimination. If the Court awards primacy to seniority, the last hired will be the first fired and the modest gains that have been achieved in redressing the effects of discrimination will be wiped out. If seniority is ignored, older white workers may lose their jobs through no fault of their own, while minority workers, who may not have suffered discrimination themselves, will

be retained. In the past, the Court has favored affirmative action; but this time, things may be different.

The case goes back to the 1970s, when blacks and Hispanics sued the Boston Civil Service Commission, charging that Police and Fire Department hiring policies were discriminatory. Although minorities then made up about 20 percent of Boston's population, only a handful of blacks served on the police force (65 out of 2,805 officers), and only 18 of the city's 1,983 firefighters were black. In the early 1970s, a Federal court ruled that the city had unlawfully discriminated against minorities, and ordered that enough blacks and Hispanics be hired to bring their numbers in line with the proportion of minorities in the city. For a while, the court's order was obeyed—by 1981, the proportion of minorities in the Police Department was 11.7 percent; in the Fire Department it was 14.7 percent.

Then fiscal austerity struck in Massachusetts. In 1981, voters approved Proposition 2½, which placed limits on property taxes. Their primary source of tax revenues drastically shrunk, local governments had to slash their budgets. Although some cities and towns exempted their fire and police departments from cuts, Boston chose not to. It laid off a number of police officers and firefighters on a last-hired, first-fired basis.

The N.A.A.C.P. promptly challenged the layoffs and won. A Federal appeals court found in 1982 that the layoffs would have "eradicat[ed] . . . all progress" made under the hiring decree and would have "eviscerated" minority representation in the two departments. If the layoffs had been carried out, minority representation would have fallen to 6.2 percent in the Police Department and to 9.1 percent in the Fire Department, although by then minorities made up 30 percent of Boston's population.

The court ordered the city to carry out the layoffs in such a way that some of the progress that had been made would be preserved. This meant that some whites with substantial seniority would have to be laid off. The police and firefighter unions appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Court will hear the case this spring, and the prospects for the minority employees are not good. Once again, the Justice Department is trying to roll back minority rights. Although its brief only calls for a modification of the layoff order, it hints at the argument the department is making in a New Orleans circuit court: remedies for employment discrimination must be limited to specific, identifiable victims, and courts should not issue hiring or layoff goals or timetables. This argument is also being urged in an *amicus curiae* brief filed by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. in the Boston case. Such a view directly contradicts the position taken by the Justice Department in that case in 1974, when it argued that the courts had a *duty* to order such relief.

A halt to all court-ordered timetables would totally frustrate efforts to open up more jobs for minorities and women. But the Court is not likely to go that far. It will probably not order lower courts to stop setting *hiring* goals. Hundreds of such orders have been issued by these courts and by Federal agencies since 1968, and the Court has refused to review them on numerous occasions.

Layoffs in disregard of seniority are another matter, however. The Supreme Court has interpreted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as not being opposed to bona fide seniority systems, even if they perpetuate discrimination. And most courts have been reluctant to require affirmative action if it would hurt specific, identifiable white workers solely to save the jobs of minority employees.

That reluctance is understandable. Obviously, the white workers had nothing to do with the original discrimination, since the employer or the union was responsible. And seniority is a hard-won form of job security, which shields workers against arbitrary firings or favoritism in promotions.

Seniority systems are not sacrosanct, however. They vary widely from industry to industry. The rules may be superseded by law when they conflict with a more compelling public policy, such as that against discrimination; they can be modified by agreements between unions and employers; the legislature can subordinate them to preferential hiring of special groups, such as union officials or veterans. In the Boston case, nineteen of those laid off had put in at least eleven years, but they weren't veterans. Veterans receive preference for Civil Service positions in Massachusetts, a preference upheld by the Supreme Court in 1979 despite its devastating effect on employment opportunities for women.

Nor are layoffs carried out strictly according to seniority necessarily less painful or more just. When workers have to be laid off, someone will inevitably get hurt, and who can say whose hurt is greater or more unjust? An unmarried white worker with ten years on the job, for example, may be better able to cope with being laid off than a minority worker with a family who has been on the job for only two years. Employees with more seniority may qualify for greater unemployment benefits, and if they are white, they may be able to get other jobs more easily. Sometimes, when whites are fired, money is found to rehire them. That happened in Boston: in the spring of 1982, not long after whites were laid off, the Legislature gave Boston enough money to rehire all the laid-off workers, blacks and whites, by July. Would this have happened if only blacks had lost their jobs?

There is another interest at stake—public safety. Integrated police departments are better at cooling racial tensions and enforcing the law in minority neighborhoods. One of the reasons Title VII was expanded in 1972 to include state and local governments was to improve police effectiveness by adding more minority officers.

The 1974-75 recession had a profound effect on minorities and women. In New York City, for example, more than half of all Hispanic workers lost their jobs and 371 out of 680 women officers were dropped from the police force. Last December, a task force that studied recent layoffs by the Federal government concluded that women and minorities are bearing the brunt of the Reagan Administration's cutbacks. If the last hired continue to be the first fired, then, as the United States Civil Rights Commission warned during that earlier recession, a stagnant economy and continuing high unemployment will lock minorities and women into "a permanent expendable economic and social class."

MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

That little country, so whimsically named for the Saviour, seems to need a great deal of intercession and to require, rather than to dispense, much love and care. As is usual with an auto-da-fé, the kindness of the inquisitors bids fair to mangle the patient, even unto death.

Most of the comment concerning the Reagan Administration's policy on El Salvador has concentrated on the alleged contrast between the "military" and the "political" solutions. In Reaganite terms, this is probably a false distinction. Since his inauguration, the President's White House has worked systematically to choke off all choices *except* the military. To be exact, the zealots have:

(1) Purged the Foreign Service of almost all dissenting voices, which has almost inevitably meant most of the experienced and sapient ones.

(2) Isolated or derailed all State Department efforts to open, or even to consider, negotiations.

(3) Practiced an extraordinary sleight of hand on Congress over the level of arms aid.

First, the Foreign Service. In 1980 William Bowdler, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs and a former Ambassador to El Salvador and Guatemala, was told to clear his desk by Inauguration Day. His temporary replacement, John Bushnell, was refused numerous ambassadorial posts and finally relegated to number two in Buenos Aires. James Cheek, Deputy Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Central America, was sent to Nepal. Lawrence Pezzullo, Ambassador to Nicaragua, was replaced shortly after Reagan's swearing-in and, despite his seniority, offered no further assignments. He left the Foreign Service last fall. Jack Binns, Carter's Ambassador to Honduras, was given the push and, after a year in academe, has found a niche in the State Department's Northern Europe Bureau. Robert White, former Ambassador to El Salvador, who dined with two of the Maryknoll nuns shortly before they were raped and murdered by the "security forces," is the best-known member of this list of victims. He was sacked within a week of Reagan's accession to the Presidency.

The men who knew too much have been replaced by the boys who know too little. Thomas Enders is now Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs. John Negroponte is Ambassador to Honduras, and by all accounts as busy as a bee. Craig Johnstone is head of the Office of Central American Affairs. For those who like the Vietnam analogy (which, to be honest with you, I'm not crazy about), it's ghoulis to note that Negroponte served four years in Saigon as a "political" officer and was a member of Kissinger's National Security Council. Johnstone was a "rural development" officer in Vietnam. Enders, of course, is notoriously and indelibly stained for his role in the secret bombing of Cambodia. No undertaking seems beneath him.

So much for the personnel aspect of the new policy. The idea of a negotiated solution has still been hard to erase, and perhaps did not finally die until two weeks ago, when both

Reagan and Secretary Shultz began bellowing for more arms and less talk. As recently as a month ago, a State Department scheme for a "two track" strategy was taking shape. Under this rubric, the Administration would meet its existing obligations on arms shipments while opening a back channel of sorts to the rebel leadership. Speeches by Ambassador Deane Hinton in San Salvador and even, on one memorable occasion in San Francisco, by Enders himself dwelt at length on conciliation and "the binding up of wounds." They called for genuine security and amnesty for the opposition, thus implicitly admitting that the March 1982 elections had not met these elementary requirements. But the plan, if it ever was a plan, was aborted by deft leaking from the circles around Gen. Vernon Walters and Judge William Clark. Jeane Kirkpatrick even appeared on national television and disputed Ambassador Hinton's figures on civilian noncombatant deaths (30,000 since 1979).

There remained the stampeding of Congress (the Tonkin factor, if you will). In phrasing its demand for \$86.3 million in 1984, the Administration dropped all its talk of steady improvement on the battlefield and insisted that the government forces would buckle and run without an exorbitant fresh subsidy (another unconscious admission of brute reality). The three-card monte trick went like this:

Congress was asked for, and Congress granted, \$26 million for fiscal 1982. This is still the agreed continuing commitment. But after the stunning guerrilla raid on Ilopango airport on January 27, 1982, in which huge numbers of government planes and helicopters were destroyed, Ronald Reagan announced that he was personally authorizing a further \$55 million in aid from emergency and contingency funds. This was justified as a one-time measure. But the exception has become the rule and defined the standard. Reagan is now planning another emergency package, first announced at \$60 million and suddenly upped last week to \$110 million (the \$60 million was for "critical consumables"—ammunition, spare parts—and the added \$50 million is for "infrastructure repairs"). Any demurrer from this figure, or the \$86.3 million for 1984, is construed as a default on "our commitments."

This mentality now approaches its apotheosis with the proposal for still another election—to be conducted under the same ruinous and distorted conditions as before. The March 1982 vote was supposed to elect an assembly which could, in its turn, write a constitution and electoral laws. All that resulted was the eclipse of Duarte and the studied avoidance of a (possibly church-mediated) offer of negotiation. These opportunities were not missed; they were evaded. Nor will there be any recognizable constitution or electoral code by the next time the long-suffering people are herded to the polls. Current official realism derides critics as wet liberals who have failed to learn from Nicaragua that the vital thing is to keep the National Guard together. Judged by its insistence on the at-all-costs preservation of the demoralized Salvadoran armed forces, the Reagan policy is best summarized as Somoza's revenge.

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The World View From Beijing

O. EDMUND CLUBB

At a banquet marking the end of his visit to Beijing last month, Secretary of State George Shultz said that while problems between the United States and China remain, he was "more convinced of the real opportunities for enhanced cooperation between our governments, our nations and peoples in a host of fields." His visit, he said, had "set the stage for renewed advances built on a stronger foundation of confidence and mutual trust."

Only hours after Shultz departed from Beijing en route to South Korea, the New China News Agency reported that his visit had indeed contributed "to some extent" to better Sino-American relations, but that Chinese leaders had told him that mutual trust and the development of sound relations between the two countries would not come until the issue of American arms sales to Taiwan was settled. The agency reported that Chinese officials had charged the United States with not observing the joint Sino-American communiqué of August 17, 1982, which commits the United States to phasing out such arms sales. They also told Shultz that the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which authorizes the sale of defensive weapons to Taiwan, constitutes a serious stumbling block in Sino-American relations and should be annulled.

The Taiwan issue is thus very much alive, and Beijing is determined to keep it that way. Why do the Chinese persist in giving it such importance? The pragmatists now in power in Beijing have taken a hard look at the changing world. It is a world in turmoil, torn by U.S.-Soviet rivalry and in the throes of a recession that is sparking protectionism and trade wars. There is mountainous international indebtedness, widespread unemployment and social unrest. There are growing tensions even within alliances, and there is the dangerous confrontation between North and South nations. Recently, China reassessed its economic and foreign policies in the light of those circumstances and formulated a new geopolitical strategy. As a result, China and the United States are now farther apart than when President Reagan took office.

What of the two countries' common opposition to the Soviet Union? Doesn't China need the American connection for its own protection? The answers to these questions must be qualified. At present, the Chinese do not fear an un-

provoked Soviet attack; that idea was abandoned even before the death of Mao Zedong. And the Maoist dogma that war between the superpowers is inevitable has also been abandoned by China's rulers. They have discovered that other countries tend to be repelled by a nation that follows a martial foreign policy and talks of nuclear war. And so Beijing now proclaims that it is striving for peace in the world.

China finds itself opposed to many American national security policies. For one thing, Beijing does not view with equanimity either the rearming of Japan or the maintenance of an American military presence in South Korea. Nor is it prepared to accept the development of closer American-Japanese-South Korean "defense" ties. Such an alliance, nominally anti-Soviet, could all too readily be turned against the Chinese. China's leaders also disagree with U.S. policies in other sensitive parts of the world, such as South Africa and Namibia, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Poland. At this point, China clearly does not view the United States as its guardian.

But what of the economic assistance China needs from the United States? Trade between the two countries has increased substantially since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979. But even here, all does not go smoothly. The United States recently imposed unilateral quotas on imports of Chinese textiles, and in retaliation Beijing slammed an embargo on all additional purchases of American cotton, soybeans and synthetic fibers in 1983. The United States is eager to sell China more than it can buy, and, for its part, China will continue importing American technology and engaging the services of American companies for projects like the exploration of offshore petroleum reserves. But when the Chinese can obtain the same goods and services elsewhere, they may sometimes use trade as a weapon against the American "imperialists." After all, if they can buy steel from Japan, wheat from Canada and soybeans from Brazil, why would they feel under any special compulsion to "buy American"?

Sino-Soviet relations are obviously relevant to Sino-U.S. relations. It would appear that in these, too, the Chinese are guided by the non-Maoist axiom "Seek truth from facts"—i.e., be realistic. While continuing to demand that the Soviet Union demonstrate by deeds, not words, a sincere intent to improve Sino-Soviet relations, Beijing has engaged in fresh diplomatic exchanges with Moscow. Since the two countries subscribe to the same basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism, they speak substantially the same political language—though with different accents. Then, too, there may be times when China perceives some tactical advantage in taking a position that parallels that of the Soviet Union, especially where the interests of Third World countries are involved. And by demonstrating that it can shift its support from one superpower to the other, China will be able to exercise more political leverage in the international arena. Whether for tactical reasons or not, China now takes a more equidistant stance in foreign affairs generally, thus giving it greater maneuverability.

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There is no reason to expect China to return any time soon to its former close relationship with the Soviet Union. Russia is under no compulsion, political or economic, to bow to the standing Chinese demands for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, cessation of Soviet support for Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea and reduction of Soviet military dispositions along the Sino-Soviet border—at least not until China offers something in return. Nonetheless, a measure of détente has more or less naturally been introduced into the Sino-Soviet relationship.

In terms of policy toward the developing countries, China's views are notably closer to those of the Soviet Union than those of the United States. According to Maoist doctrine, China is a member of the Third World. Because of the current international recession, and the related deterioration of many developing countries' economies, the Third World has a high priority in Beijing's strategic thinking. China is not in a position to offer significant gratis aid to other developing countries, but it has undertaken a variety of construction projects with such nations as Tanzania and Zambia. And it is placing new emphasis on its support for the Third World nations' call for the establishment of a new world economic order in which the richer countries would share some of their wealth with the poorer ones. But if the Third World is receiving increased attention from Chinese strategists, it has a different place in American calculations. There is little convergence of Chinese and American views in this regard.

The nature of the shift in China's geopolitical strategy was clearly established at the twelfth Chinese Communist Party (C.C.P.) Congress last September and the fifth session of the fifth National People's Congress (N.P.C.) last December. Under the Constitution adopted by the party congress, the C.C.P. takes Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought as its "guide to action" and upholds proletarian internationalism. Relations between the C.C.P. and other Communist and working-class parties are to be based on independence and equality, with no party intervening in the internal affairs of another. The C.C.P. appears to have

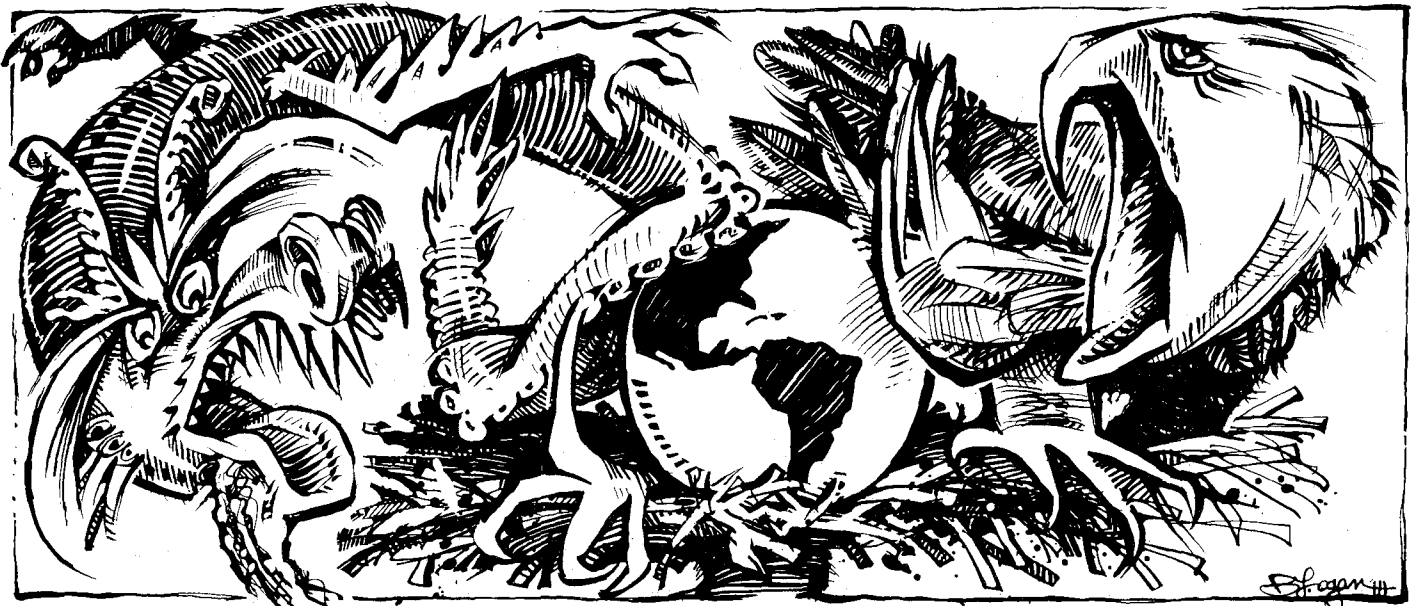
renounced the Maoist goal of establishing Chinese leadership of the world Communist movement.

The preamble to the Constitution adopted by the N.P.C. on December 4 was imbued with the same spirit. It states that "the future of China is closely linked with that of the whole world," and continues:

China adheres to an independent foreign policy as well as to the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence in developing diplomatic relations and economic and cultural exchanges with other countries; China consistently opposes imperialism, hegemonism and colonialism, works to strengthen unity with the people of other countries, supports the oppressed nations and the developing countries in their just struggle to win and preserve national independence and develop their national economies, and strives to safeguard world peace and promote the cause of human progress.

As though to proclaim to the world China's new priorities in foreign relations, Premier Zhao Ziyang visited eleven African countries in December and January. In a news conference at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on January 13, according to a report in the *Beijing Review*, the Premier asserted that "to strengthen unity and co-operation with African and other Third World countries is a cornerstone of China's independent foreign policy." Zhao said he had found that his host countries (and "some liberation organizations") harbor views similar to China's on a number of important issues, including opposition to the power politics of "big countries" and to the aggression and intervention of "imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism and racism." The African countries also favor closer cooperation among the developing nations and the creation of a new international economic order. Zhao called for concerted action by Third World countries to that end: "To us Third World countries, our strength lies in our unity."

At the same news conference, the Premier said that improvement of Sino-American relations depended on the



DRAWINGS BY BILL LOGAN

conscientious implementation of the Sino-American joint communiqué on arms sales to Taiwan.

And his views of the Soviet Union? It was China's desire, Zhao said, to normalize relations with that country on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and China hoped that the Soviet Union would remove obstacles to that end.

And so, at the time China was implementing its new grand strategy, Secretary of State Shultz flew to Beijing. In this atmosphere, it was not surprising that the results of his visit were so meager: the governing philosophies and geopolitical strategies of the two countries are radically different. Through its revised strategy in the international arena and its domestic modernization program, China plans to work toward becoming a world power in its own right. Beijing's new approach offers a challenge to U.S. policies in the Third World—and in Asia in particular. Will this lead to a confrontation between the two countries? We had best face up to it: there are more stumbling blocks than one on the way to truly harmonious Sino-American relations. □

■ LET 'EM FREEZE IN THE DARK

Reagan Uncaps Natural Gas

HERMAN SCHWARTZ

The natural gas industry has repealed the law of supply and demand. Supply is up and demand is down, but the price of gas is skyrocketing. It has more than doubled since 1978, and this winter the average household paid 25 percent more than it did last winter; in some parts of the country, gas bills jumped 50 percent. And if the decontrol plan announced by President Reagan in his radio speech on February 26 is adopted by Congress, those bills will go up even more.

There are lots of villains in this piece: the Natural Gas Policy Act of 1978, greedy gas producers and pipeline companies, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, to name just a few. Regardless of villains, however, no one seems able to figure out a way to stop the upward march of America's gas bills.

In the 1920s and 1930s, interstate gas pipeline companies, many of which were also producers, charged natural gas users excessive and discriminatory prices. As a result, in 1938, Congress passed the Natural Gas Act, which regulated both producers' wellhead prices and pipeline transmission rates. The controls only applied to gas destined for interstate commerce, however; intrastate gas was unaffected. By the mid-1970s, most producers had shifted the bulk of their

output to the more lucrative intrastate market and severe shortages had developed in the national market. The crisis created by these shortages spawned the Natural Gas Policy Act of 1978, a confusing product of long, acrimonious wrangling. The act was a compromise between those who wanted deregulation of wellhead prices and those who wanted to extend regulation to intrastate markets. It called for the deregulation of "new gas" by 1985, allowed high prices for such gas until then in order to stimulate production and retained lower prices for "old gas" (gas discovered before 1978) in order to moderate price increases and prevent producers from reaping windfall profits.

NGPA's authors assumed that during the transition to complete decontrol in 1985, prices would rise gradually. But it didn't work out that way. As the pipeline companies scrambled for reserves, the price of unregulated gas was quickly bid up to four and five times the price of regulated gas; these inflated prices were then averaged in with the lower prices of regulated gas, raising users' bills. Under the long-term contracts peculiar to this industry, pipeline companies must buy 80 to 90 percent, or more, of what producers deliver, whether they can sell it or not. This has forced them to buy gas they can't use, which has driven prices up further. Expensive imported gas, such as Canadian gas and Algerian liquefied natural gas, now accounts for a significant proportion of sales in certain areas, and the price of controlled old gas has also gone up substantially. Under automatic adjustment clauses, utilities pass on rising costs to consumers.

The rise in the price of gas, together with the drop in the price of oil, which competes with gas for industrial users, and the decline in demand because of the recession and conservation, have put the utilities and the pipeline companies in a bind: they are losing business from industrial customers, yet they must continue to pay for gas they have contracted for but can't use. Here again, the costs are passed on to homeowners, who can't easily switch to oil.

There are other culprits. Last month, an administrative law judge in Washington, D.C., found that the Columbia Gas Transmission Company, which supplies utilities in Washington, Baltimore, much of Ohio and elsewhere, buys gas from an affiliate at exorbitant prices while refusing to do business with independent producers that charge less. Because of the company's policy, some 20,000 small independent suppliers in Appalachia had to shut down their wells. Many of them have been forced out of business.

And Columbia Gas is not unique. Gas from wells in Kansas selling for 59 cents per thousand cubic feet goes begging while a pipeline company supplying Kansas City pays nine times that amount for Wyoming gas. Consumers' bills in that city rose 40 percent, and the gas in several thousand homes has been shut off. In Oklahoma, El Paso Gas is buying large quantities of natural gas from its own wells at \$10.35 and \$9.60 per thousand cubic feet for delivery in Southern California, while sharply cutting its purchases of gas from independent producers in the San Juan Basin of New Mexico that charge only \$2.75 per thousand cubic feet.

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Some producers refuse to sell low-priced gas unless buyers contract for substantial amounts of high-priced gas as well. As one gas utility executive put it, "A producer may have several deep wells . . . [producing high-priced] unregulated gas, and if you want to buy his [cheap] regulated gas, you take the unregulated gas or he won't sell to you." Other producers are renegotiating contracts to reflect the current higher prices.

The effects of skyrocketing gas bills are being felt nationwide, since more than half of America's homes are heated by gas. In California, where 90 percent of the homes are gas heated, the average monthly bill rose 75 percent in the last three years; there have been reports of cities dimming or turning off street lights to reduce their fuel bills. One Indiana town plans to lay off teachers if gas prices continue to rise. In Peoria, Illinois, the average monthly bill this winter increased 60 percent, to \$200; in Atlanta and Cleveland, gas prices have tripled in the last five years. The Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition estimates that the heat will be shut off in at least 300,000 gas-heated homes this winter.

The solution President Reagan proposed on February 26 will not ease the pain. It will mean more money for producers—many of them big oil companies—and economic flimflam for consumers. The centerpiece of the Administration's plan is the immediate decontrol of gas prices, which may cost consumers an estimated \$75 billion in the next three years. As a sop to them, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will be given more power to control prices, and increases above the inflation rate must be approved by the F.E.R.C. before being passed along to users.

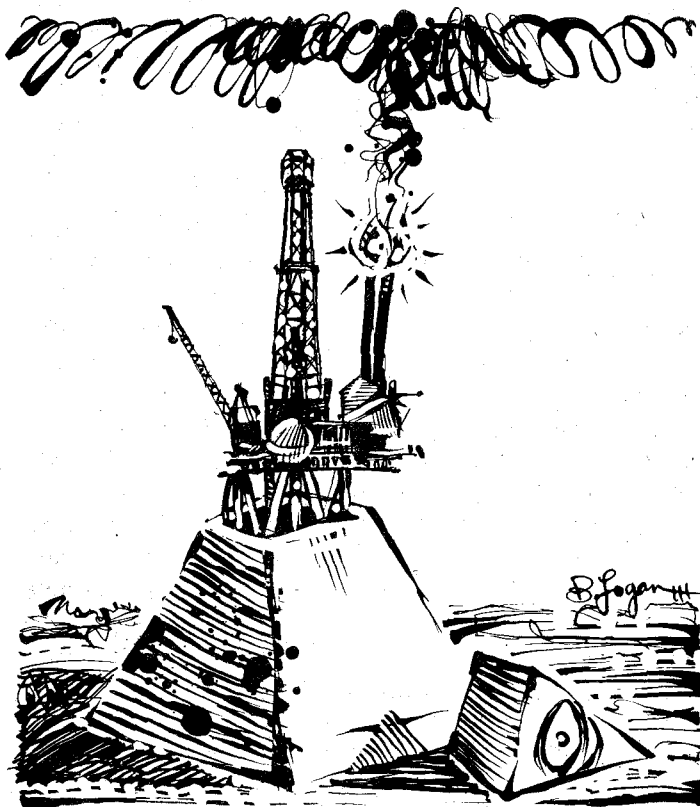
The idea of making the F.E.R.C. the consumer's protector is a laughable one. After all, the F.E.R.C.'s policies are the cause of much of the current mess. For years, the commission has consistently interpreted NGPA in ways that encourage higher prices. A few weeks ago, for instance, the commission construed a discretionary section of the act as allowing consumers to be saddled with a \$3 billion-a-year price hike for the next several years. This winter it interpreted the statutory provision giving it power to regulate pipeline company purchasing agreements so narrowly that the provision was rendered null. Last April, the commission began hearings on increasing old gas prices and called for suggestions on how to get around the 1938 and 1978 Acts, both of which seem to prohibit the proposed increases. If the commission makes it possible for the companies to raise these prices, the nation's total gas bill could shoot up an additional \$21 billion, to \$48 billion, over a three-year period. The F.E.R.C.'s anticonsumer bias aside, its added duties under the Reagan plan could produce, in the words of one Congressional aide, "an administrative nightmare."

The Reagan proposal is a clever ploy. He is using the present crisis to push through the decontrol his producer friends have unsuccessfully sought for almost thirty years and which Reagan promised them during his Presidential campaign. Decontrol will mean disaster for millions of poor people, hardship for millions in the middle-income brackets and fortunes for a few. Exxon, Mobil and the rest of the

twenty largest oil companies stand to inherit a \$40 billion windfall from the demise of controls. Once controls are removed, producers will raise the price of the cheaper old gas. Given the rigid contract arrangements in the industry, which will remain largely unaffected, these increases will be swiftly transmitted to consumers. The General Accounting Office estimated recently that if decontrol was adopted, the combined effect of marketing forces and contractual constraints would produce price increases ranging from 18 percent to 110 percent, with 88 percent the most likely figure. Even *The Wall Street Journal* commented acidly that "the supposed consumerists [in the White House] aren't doing consumers any favor. Prices will continue to rise sharply." Not surprisingly, the big producers and their Congressional allies, like Phil Gramm, the newly converted Republican from Texas, greeted the Reagan plan with high enthusiasm.

Moreover, the theoretical assumptions on which the "free market" decontrol proponents rely have been consistently exploded by the reality of market imperfections and contract rigidities. The most important such reality is that gas prices are set not by a free, competitive market but by oil prices, which, though falling, are still cartel-created. Morris Adelman, a professor of economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has observed that a truly competitive oil price could be below \$10 per barrel, far from the current \$28 to \$30.

The gas companies must be given incentives to get the gas out of the ground, but decontrol is the wrong approach. Certainly no policy that would result in large numbers of the poor and the elderly freezing in the dark should even be considered. It would make more sense to institute full price controls on all types of gas, leaving a margin of profits for ex-



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ploration incentives, and to abolish or modify the contract provisions that force prices up. Contrary to what the industry doomsayers have preached for years, it is now generally agreed that the United States has enormous reserves of natural gas [see Fred J. Cook, "The Natural Gas Boom," *The Nation*, July 12, 1980], which could be put on the market at reasonable prices. Producers don't need prices of \$10 per thousand cubic feet, or even \$5 or \$3.50, as an incentive so long as controls apply uniformly to both the inter- and intrastate markets.

It is unlikely that Congress will approve either Reagan decontrol or recontrol, however. Natural gas legislation is always enormously difficult to enact, and especially now. The industry is deeply divided over which approach to take, consumers are angry about high prices, and Congress has important budgetary and tax matters to occupy its time in the next two years. It will probably be reluctant to take up something as controversial and difficult as the natural gas question. Nevertheless, the Administration's proposal is carefully crafted to look as if it gives something to everyone, and it is being sold—in Reagan newspeak—as a way to reduce prices. Consumer groups and their allies should take no chances and mobilize against it, lest the big gas producers and their friends in the Administration find a way to make the producers' greediest dreams come true. □

■ **LAW COMES TO LINDEN**

The Union That G.M. Couldn't Bust

MICHAEL HOYT

Lucille Dunlap vividly remembers June 7, 1976, her first night on the assembly line in the chassis department of the General Motors plant in Linden, New Jersey. As the large engines slid by, she had to screw caps on the air conditioning systems, attach two fuel lines and install a fistful of rubber hoses—all in sixty seconds. Soon she fell behind. She had to chase an engine along the assembly line, then jog back to her work station to deal with the next one. After several hours of this, she decided she didn't want to spend the rest of her life on the run. Despite strong objections from her foreman, she called a "cop"—a union representative.

Lucille Dunlap's experience that first night on the job taught her which side she was on. She became active in the United Automobile Workers union and was eventually elected an official. She published a newsletter for the 300 workers she represented at the Linden plant called the "Chassis Line News," which explained in plain language the employee rights guaranteed under the union contract. The chassis department, she says, was "kind of militant" for three years.

Michael Hoyt is a freelance writer based in Brooklyn.

Then, after a layoff, she lost an election and found herself back on the assembly line, assigned to operate a heavy compressor. According to charges filed and later dropped by the National Labor Relations Board, no woman had ever worked on that machine: it was a task, the N.L.R.B. said, that G.M. "had reason to believe Dunlap was physically unable to perform." When her foreman assigned her partner to another job, leaving her alone with the compressor, Dunlap realized something was up. "It's payback time, Lucy," the foreman told her. Within minutes the reverse snap of the machine jerked her off her feet. Pain radiated down one of her legs; she was unable to walk. Her doctors later told her she had dislocated a hip and injured her back, damaging the sciatic nerve. Dunlap became a casualty in management's long, mean war against the union.

It began in the early 1970s when a group of young auto workers at the Linden plant began challenging both management and the leadership of Local 595, which had grown fat and complacent. G.M. immediately set out to crush the militants. It launched a campaign of spying, harassment, threats, illegal firings and interference in union elections that lasted nearly a decade.

Despite the company's efforts, it lost the war: the militants won control of Local 595, and G.M. was almost dragged into court for contempt by the N.L.R.B. The board dropped the charges, but the company still faces hearings on accusations of unfair labor practices—the third set of charges in the past ten years. The U.A.W. International, which once regarded the militants as boat-rockers, seems to have made peace with them after their slate won a 1982 election. The flame G.M. tried to extinguish at Linden still burns—a beacon encouraging other militant members of the U.A.W.

There are 5,000 employees at the Linden plant, working two shifts and assembling cars that would look out of place parked in residential streets of this gray industrial town. The factory turns out some of G.M.'s most expensive models—the Cadillac Eldorado and Seville, which sell for upward of \$20,000, the Buick Riviera and the Oldsmobile Toronado.

Until recently, the man in charge at Linden was Edmond Azar, whose title was director of personnel. Azar's career with G.M. began in the 1940s, and by all accounts he ran a tight ship. According to Edward Gray, who will retire in May as U.A.W. regional director for New Jersey, Azar was a "Rasputin type." Tony Fernandez, president of Local 595, called him "the Howard Hughes of G.M. . . . He sat up in his office and controlled things . . . and he controlled this union for years."

Azar's methods of dealing with union leaders were not unusual in the industry. Those who did not challenge management found him helpful: he would push through a requested transfer, give in on a shop-floor grievance and extend other favors. But if a union official was aggressive, he or she soon discovered that Azar would deny every request and slow grievance procedures to a maddening crawl. Consequently, rebel shop stewards could not deliver on worker demands, and most of them were not re-elected. As time

went on, the union-management relationship got cozier and cozier; the company and the union leaders had a mutual interest in cutting down any rebels who challenged the system. Labor relations eventually reached the point where management did not negotiate; it simply parceled out favors to cooperative union leaders.

In the 1970s some of the workers began to chafe under this system. Most of them were young and worked the night shift (old-timers got the day shift), and a number of them were women, blacks and Vietnam veterans, who took a more confrontational attitude toward management than the older workers. They needed a representative who shared their militancy, and they found one in Douglas Stevens, the only union committeeman at Linden who, they felt, took his job seriously.

Stevens is 35 now, a big man with a slight paunch and a wary look, but he was a teen-ager when he joined the night shift in 1965. Like Lucille Dunlap, he did not like the atmosphere in the plant and began sounding out his co-workers. "The way I dealt with it, other people came to me with their problems," he said. "I began to get protective." He was suspended twice, in 1971 and 1972, after announcing he would run for union office. He was elected committeeman in 1973 and mastered the intricacies of work rules, pay schedules and grievance procedures. "Stevens," said assembler Stanley Woodruff, "is a walking contract."

Azar recognized that Stevens was a threat to his power. "He was paranoid about Stevens. He thought he was a Communist or something," said David Uffleman, who worked under Azar in the early 1970s but has since left G.M. to study law. "It was puzzling because I would expect Azar had seen militants come and go. We always spoke of 'training' union stewards—it was a little sarcastic way we



talked about it. Maybe Stevens didn't want to be housebroken."

In any event, a campaign to crush Stevens and his supporters was launched by management—a campaign that had at least the tacit approval of top-level G.M. officials. (Asked about this, corporate officers and the company's New Jersey attorney declined to comment.)

The first shot was fired in 1973. In what looked very much like a setup, Stevens was suspended again, this time for "loitering." When word of his suspension got around, the night shift called a wildcat strike. Only 105 workers stayed out the first night, however, and 49 the next. G.M. promptly fired the members of the latter group, who became known as "the 49ers," and reinstated Stevens pending an investigation.

When G.M. questioned the 49ers, according to later testimony before the N.L.R.B., they were unanimous in denying that Stevens had ordered the strike. But after three months, thirty-six of the discharged workers signed a statement saying that Stevens *had* led the strike, and G.M. fired him. The reason for their change of heart emerged in testimony in an N.L.R.B. investigation in 1974: they had heard through union officials of alleged offers by management that they could have their jobs back if they signed the statement. A local union leader called Stevens "a Communist and Pinky and everything." As a result of this testimony, in 1975 the N.L.R.B. ordered the factory to rehire Stevens with full back pay and to cease harassing union representatives; in April 1976, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit upheld the N.L.R.B. order. But the fight took two and a half years.

Meanwhile, the entire night shift had been laid off in 1974 as a result of the oil shocks, and many of the workers spent their idle hours talking about reforming the union. Out of these discussions emerged the determination to organize a rebel caucus in the local. Thus, Linden Auto Workers—LAW for short—was born.

LAW members mapped strategies for taking over the local and making it more militant. They worked up proposals on workplace health and safety and on curbing the roller-coaster cycle of layoffs and rehiring. Stevens remembers seeing day-shift employees ignore the half-dozen "revolutionary" groups passing out leaflets at the factory gate but take the LAW material. "People began to see we were serious," he said.

Among those who took LAW seriously was management. Despite the N.L.R.B. order not to harass union members, G.M. continued the effort to destroy the caucus. The company refused to rehire nine workers who were active in LAW. And LAW candidates, employees who backed them and members of the caucus seen wearing blue jackets emblazoned with the group's name were subjected to petty disciplinary actions. Uffleman remembers Azar speaking of Stevens "as if he were a demon." It was not unusual, Uffleman said, for Local 595 officials who were running for re-election against LAW members to receive help with their campaign literature from the company's personnel office, a violation of the National Labor Relations Act.

G.M. successfully fended off all union charges of harassment until someone within the corporation leaked a copy of a personnel department log book to the N.L.R.B. in 1977. Entitled the "Stevens Log," it provided a detailed account of the company's efforts to discredit the union leader. Although a recurrent phrase was "Stevens quiet tonight," most of the entries weren't so bland.

"It went beyond Doug Stevens's wildest accusations," said attorney Craig Livingston, a partner in the Newark firm of Ball, Hayden, Kiernan & Livingston, which represented the union before the N.L.R.B. "Stevens didn't know G.M. had set spies on him in the plant, transferred people to his district to undermine him, disciplined workers for dealing with him."

After being confronted with the evidence in the log, management sent its legal team to meet with John Irving, general counsel of the N.L.R.B. "They were very concerned about the company's reputation," Irving, who is now with a Washington, D.C., firm, recalled recently. "G.M. does not normally do business with the labor board. It's not that kind of company. They wanted to resolve the allegations so there would be no need for N.L.R.B. action. There wasn't any doubt in my mind they were sincere."

Irving moved to test that sincerity. According to Peter Eveleth, deputy assistant general counsel for contempt litigation at the N.L.R.B., Irving threatened G.M. with contempt because of its violation of a court decree enforcing the 1975 N.L.R.B. order. The company quickly agreed, in June 1978, to an out-of-court settlement, which did not include the usual disclaimer of wrongdoing. G.M. promised to halt surveillance, threats, transfers, interference, discharges and other tactics designed to undermine the union; to expunge from the personnel files of a long list of workers all mention of disciplinary actions against them; and to pay \$350,000 in back pay to the employees it had refused to rehire or had unjustly suspended.

But before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit approved the settlement in December 1978, the company resumed its antiunion activities. "After years of litigation, I thought I'd won," said attorney Livingston. "But G.M. didn't abide by the court orders. It was puzzling. My understanding is you obey the law. G.M. acted like lawless thugs."

"Either something was very wrong at that plant," he continued, "or G.M. was testing a new form of labor relations—to bring the union to its knees, regardless of the legal consequences, just to see if that works."

Evidence of harassment emerged in testimony to the N.L.R.B. in a contempt action it started against G.M. in 1978. Between February 1978 and August 1981, G.M. had suspended LAW stalwart Michael Garrone seven times for engaging in union activities. Under the company's discipline system, each suspension brings an employee closer to being fired; Garrone, a forklift mechanic, finally couldn't take the pressure and dropped out of union politics for several months.

In another incident, a G.M. foreman followed LAW can-

didate Eddy Duarte everywhere he went, even into the lavatory, timing his breaks with a stopwatch. In still another, a different foreman refused to bargain a grievance with LAW committeeman John Field. Instead, according to Field's sworn affidavit to the N.L.R.B., he tried to choke Field, threw him bodily out of his office and screamed repeatedly, "You goddamn little Jew!" The foreman, the N.L.R.B. charged with considerable understatement, was "interfering with Field's activities as a union and LAW committeeman."

The N.L.R.B. was also told that management attempted to coerce local members not to vote for LAW candidates by threatening to make working conditions unpleasant for supporters of the caucus and to eliminate jobs or even close the factory if LAW candidates won. The pressure was unrelenting and often effective. LAW did poorly in the 1980 and 1981 union elections. "They were out to get us," assembler Sam Jones recalled. "It was so clear."

Apparently tired of having its orders ignored, the N.L.R.B. went on the attack. By 1982 the board had charged G.M. with forty unfair labor practices at Linden. It also cited twenty-two incidents—including the retaliation against Lucille Dunlap—in a separate contempt action against G.M. for violating the board's 1976 and 1978 court orders.

The contempt charge was dropped a week before the trial was to begin, on February 22 of this year. According to N.L.R.B. attorney Bernard Jeweler, the board's general counsel decided that the evidence wasn't strong enough to support a charge of contempt, which requires "clear and convincing" proof. The charge may be reduced to unfair labor practices, for which a "preponderance of evidence" is sufficient proof.

The board's most recent actions seem to have halted G.M.'s attempt to crush LAW. Because of improprieties by the local leadership during the 1981 election, involving misuse of union resources, the Department of Labor ordered that new ones be held, and last spring Linden employees voted the LAW slate into power. After trying to get rid of Doug Stevens for a decade, G.M. must now bargain with him as the new shop committee chairman.

Not long after the election, Edmond Azar announced his retirement, marking the end of an era of business unionism dominated by this lone, autocratic figure. As though to signal that a new era was beginning, G.M. installed a new management team at the plant.

In mid-February, Owen Bieber, the unopposed candidate to succeed Douglas Fraser as president of the U.A.W., arrived at Linden on a fence-mending tour. The new managers attended a reception for him, a further sign, perhaps, that they want to bargain in good faith and adhere to the law. Recently, every worker received a personalized blue plastic card containing management's pledge to "extend to our employees a working environment where they will be treated with dignity and respect." The cards were regarded as something of a joke by the workers, however. They have learned that dignity and respect are not "extended"; they must be fought for and won. □

■ REAGAN'S Rx FOR HEALTH COSTS

Voodoo Medical Economics

TOBY COHEN

The cost of medical care has climbed so steeply in the past decade that only people with health insurance and the affluent can afford private treatment for anything worse than a minor ailment. Should costs continue to rise at their present rapid rate, insurance premiums may become so expensive that employers, the major contributors to medical insurance plans, will decide that even with their 100 percent tax deduction for premium payments, the price of health plans for their employees is prohibitive.

President Reagan believes that the impetus for this dizzying climb was the blank check the government gave employers. Because everyone gets a free ride, the President reasons, no one—not the employer, not the employee, not the insurance company and certainly not the doctors and hospitals—has any incentive to hold costs down. The solution, he believes, is to encourage Americans to choose less extensive and less expensive medical coverage. Reagan has called for a tax on employee health benefits, under which all medical premiums paid by an employer, above \$840 per year per individual, would be considered taxable income. Money would thus be taken out of the pockets of employees covered by plans with annual premiums exceeding \$840—but put into the pockets of employees whose plans cost less than \$840, in the form of a tax-free rebate to be paid by the employer (the cheaper the plan, the larger the rebate). At the same time, the President's proposal would require employers to offer employees a choice of medical insurance plans—those with large deductibles and co-insurance to be paid by the insured, and prepaid group insurance plans (H.M.O.s), under which patients are treated for all ailments by doctors associated with the group for a flat annual fee.

The President contends that the tax incentives he has proposed would encourage workers to select less expensive plans, forcing insurance companies to compete for customers by devising economical plans with broad coverage. This competition would give insurance companies an incentive to cut administrative costs rather than simply pass them on to patients. Patients are treated for all ailments by doctors associated with the group for a flat annual fee.

Weighing the rebates against higher taxes, more and more employees would opt for insurance plans with large deductibles or co-insurance provisions. Finding themselves paying a significant portion of their medical bills, they would shop around for the best bargains. This bargain hunting would place additional pressure on doctors to lower their fees or

Toby Cohen was the project director of the Medical Practice Task Force of the New York State Assembly.

to join H.M.O.s. Finally, President Reagan assumes that when people have to pay a greater portion of their medical bills, they won't go to doctors as often as they do now.

Whether or not Reagan's expectations are realistic remains to be tested. Even if he is right, there's an important factor to consider: Reagan's plan depends on the carrot of rebates and the stick of higher taxes to induce people to choose cheap insurance plans with large deductibles and co-insurance provisions. But the people most likely to choose cheap plans are those with the lowest incomes—people who would be hard pressed to muster a \$2,500 deductible payment should illness strike.

Are there any alternatives to the Reagan approach? One was Senator Edward Kennedy's National Health Security bill, which would have eliminated private health insurance and paid doctors and hospitals directly out of annual appropriations in the Federal budget. Kennedy sat out the Nixon and Ford terms, waiting for a Democratic President—Carter, in 1976—to shepherd it through Congress.

But Carter and his Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Joseph Califano, would have none of the Kennedy plan. Califano argued that the government could not afford to guarantee every American comprehensive medical care, and that it shouldn't become embroiled in regulating the huge health-care industry. He also said that insurance companies shouldn't be deprived of this major source of revenue.

After rejecting Kennedy's scheme, Califano enlisted Alain Enthoven, a Stanford University economics professor, to come up with a new approach. The plan Enthoven came up with is essentially the one President Reagan is pushing. Enthoven's proposal has also found much favor on both sides of the aisle in Congress. It seems to be a more attractive solution to the problem of soaring medical costs—certainly a more palatable one to the powerful health-care industry lobby—than government regulation.

Realizing that his bill had no chance of being passed, Kennedy bounced back with the Health Care For All Americans bill, which incorporates Enthoven's idea of encouraging competition among insurers. Unlike the Enthoven plan, however, Kennedy's scheme does not rely solely on competition to control costs. Kennedy doubts that the lure of tax-free rebates would increase competition sufficiently to accomplish that goal. He also fears that competition alone would lead to greater inequities in medical coverage because people eager for rebates or for reduced taxes would be strongly attracted to bargain insurance plans even if their coverage was inadequate.

Consequently, the Health Care For All Americans bill requires that (1) all insurance plans provide at a minimum a package of unlimited medical care, save for psychiatric and dental services and drugs, and (2) that the total charges for these services be kept within a fixed amount budgeted annually by the government. The size of this budget, and a schedule of doctors' fees, hospital costs and the like, would be set through negotiations among representatives of consumers, unions, doctors, hospitals, insurance companies and the government.

Within the constraints of this budget and the minimal-

services requirement, consumers, health-care providers and insurance companies would be encouraged to compete, just as they are under the Enthoven plan. But the scope of competition under Kennedy's proposal would be much narrower: it would be between plans that offer services beyond those in the required package and plans that offer the required package at lower cost, with the consumer receiving the difference as a tax-free rebate. It would be legally impossible for anyone to be underinsured. The budget would keep costs from rising too rapidly and would limit what doctors and hospitals could charge.

It is these constraints that make the difference between a plan that would guarantee comprehensive medical care to all Americans at a negotiated but fixed cost and one that would rely on unrestrained competition to determine who would get what amount of medical care at what price.

At present, there are no other ways to halt soaring medical costs: it is either Reagan's way or a budget approach.

But Americans have shown little interest in the budget approach, whether it is Kennedy's or that embodied in Representative Ronald Dellums's bill (a refinement of the British National Health Service, with government ownership of hospitals and salaried doctors). It may be they fear that under a national budget for medical care, they would no longer be able to go to as many doctors as they want, as often as they want—all at a cost to themselves of from \$40 to \$260 a year, depending on what insurance plan they are covered by.

If this is what their fear of national health insurance is all about—that a budget will compromise the quality of care—it is ironic. For this very fear may allow the imposition of a more austere system, one devised by conservatives, in which hospital care is stringently budgeted (for example, prospective reimbursement for Medicare patients, where the government pays a fixed dollar amount for each Medicare patient based on his or her illness) and insurance coverage for ambulatory cases is discouraged. Then they would have the freedom of going to as many doctors as they choose, without the insurance to support the luxury. □

Antitrust

(Continued From Front Cover)

its greedy paws off a competitor, and there was always the long-shot chance that they might do it again. Also, the Justice Department and the F.T.C. occasionally, just occasionally, got their lines straight—and then they sounded noble indeed; so much so that they were even taken seriously, or at least spoken of seriously, and by conservatives as often as by liberals, for the ideal of a competitive market is as much a part of one ideology as of the other. Thus, for example, I find in my moldy antitrust file a pamphlet issued in

Robert Sherrill, for many years *The Nation's* Washington editor, has moved to Florida and is now the Southern correspondent for the *Texas Observer*.

1975 by the very conservative American Enterprise Institute. In it Jerrold G. Van Cise, a partner in the law firm of Cahill Gordon and Reindel in New York City and a former chairman of the American Bar Association's section on antitrust law, hailed the laws as playing an important, if imperfect, role in what he called "our American dream."

Van Cise made it seem that the antitrust laws were getting more potent all the time. Not only did they apply to the merging of competitors but they "would appear increasingly to raise doubts as to the legality of the expansion of a corporation through its acquisition of the stock or assets of other substantial companies, whether or not they are competitors." So, warned Van Cise, "the merger-minded executive dreaming today of expanding his corporate borders through acquisitions . . . should keep in mind that . . . his form of growth must run the gauntlet of critical scrutiny from the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission. . . ."

That warning sounds very old-fashioned today, for the "gauntlet" no longer exists. President Reagan's appointments to the antitrust division and the Federal Trade Commission—not to mention the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Treasury Department, etc.—have brought the show to an end. There is no such thing as antitrust enforcement in the Reagan Administration. Finis. Curtain.

The best explanation of *Antitrust's* demise can be found in *Reagan's Ruling Class: Portraits of the President's Top One Hundred Officials*, by Ronald Brownstein and Nina Easton.* This is not a pleasant book to read, but for understanding the Reagan Administration it is as necessary to have at hand as a snakebite kit in Rangoon.

The biographical sketch of William Baxter, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the antitrust division, tells us that he trained for his position over the past two decades by hiring out as a consultant to such outfits as Exxon and Levi Strauss while he taught law at Stanford. Before joining the Reagan Administration, his views on antitrust did a complete reversal. In 1968, while serving on President Johnson's Task Force on Antitrust Policy, he recommended legislation to break up large firms that dominate an industry and also to prevent the giants from gaining control of an industry through mergers. Today, he takes the opposite position: he says he can "envision a world" in which 100 conglomerates literally own everything—each holding 1 percent of every market. Does that vision frighten him? Not in the slightest.

How could he have done such a flip-flop in so brief a time? Baxter explains his earlier views on deconcentration by saying he was too young to know better. As Brownstein and Easton drily point out, "He was 39 at the time." We are left to speculate that the "kid" was subsequently pulled aside by some older and wiser colleague and advised that opposing big business was not the way to get on in the world. At any rate, his 180-degree turn came soon after he left President Johnson's task force. He even denounced Attorney General John Mitchell as a "populist" because

of his inhospitality toward corporate mergers.

At his confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Baxter gave fair warning that he is still loyal to the mergerists: "I do not believe," he said, "that any particular degree of concentration in an industry necessarily indicates an antitrust violation and I am not sympathetic to the view that concentrated industries as a rule should be broken up. . . . I am not convinced . . . that conglomerate mergers, or mergers generally, have increased economic concentration to dangerous levels."

It should have come as no surprise that not long after he took over the antitrust division, he negotiated a settlement of the government's suit against A.T.&T., wiping out years of work by his predecessors. At about the same time, he also killed the government's thirteen-year-old case against I.B.M. There was a strong stench of conflict of interest about the latter action. Baxter had once been paid a modest consulting fee by I.B.M. in an antitrust case, and he had served as the company's lobbyist in Europe. And, as *The Wall Street Journal* pointed out, I.B.M. had paid Baxter's salary at Stanford during the 1968-69 school year.

Consider another profile in *Reagan's Ruling Class*—that of Norman B. Ture. Ture, who was Under Secretary of Treasury for Tax and Economic Affairs until he resigned last June, was asked by Brownstein and Easton if he was embarrassed by the fact that much of the money corporations saved as a result of Reagan's 1981 tax package has been spent not to increase production and modernize factories but to gobble up other companies. Did he care, for example, that U.S. Steel, which for years has been whimpering that it lacks sufficient capital to make its equipment competitive with that of foreign companies, gambled \$6.6 billion to buy Marathon Oil? Not at all. "We could care less" how companies spend their tax savings, he said. "The market works very effectively. And I would certainly not impose any governmental judgments." Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, Brownstein and Easton write, "displayed a similar view toward mergers during our interview."

John Shad is chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. The S.E.C. is obliged by law to protect the rights of stockholders when corporate executives buy other companies even though it is not in their own firms' best interests. Shad believes that such transactions are none of the S.E.C.'s business. He's in favor of mergers. "Acquisitions," he told Brownstein and Easton, "are often more efficient than internal growth." But what would you expect from a man who had spent eighteen years running E.F. Hutton's merger and corporate financing department? Reviewing the speeches Shad made during his Hutton days, Brownstein and Easton discovered that he frequently recommended that corporations snap up "major competitors, customers, and suppliers . . . for it is generally within these groups that the greatest operating advantages can be realized through a merger." Although he acknowledged that such mergers might appear to break the antitrust laws, Shad urged his clients to stay cool: "Ideal merger prospects should not be lightly dismissed simply because of the possibility of such problems—which are often surmountable."

* *Reagan's Ruling Class* (\$24.50) is published by the Presidential Accountability Group, Box 19312, Washington, D.C. Pantheon Books will publish a paperback edition this spring.

Indeed they are; or at least they have been since Reagan took over. Encouraged by the Administration's permissiveness, big business engaged in an orgy of mergers and acquisitions in 1981. More than \$82 billion was spent on 2,395 mergers, an amount nearly 50 percent greater than the previous yearly high. And the orgy continued last year: U.S. Steel bought Marathon Oil for \$6.6 billion; the INA Corporation and Connecticut General united in a \$4.2 billion merger; Occidental Petroleum bought Cities Service for \$4.1 billion; Norfolk and Western Railway and Southern Railway made a \$1.7 billion merger; American General bought N.L.T. for \$1.6 billion; R.J. Reynolds bought Heublein for \$1.3 billion; Baldwin-United bought M.G.I.C. Investment for \$1.2 billion; Smith Kline bought Beckman Instruments for \$1.04 billion; Allied bought Supron Energy for \$712 million; Coca-Cola bought Columbia Pictures for \$630 million. Those are just a few of the largest mergers and acquisitions of the year in terms of dollars. Deserving a separate mention is the most notorious and grotesque of them all, in which Bendix attempted to buy Martin Marietta and ended up becoming an unwilling subsidiary of Allied. This deal was a \$1.3 billion mess (it also involved United Technologies), and not even the participants can fully explain what happened.

The Administration's policies have resulted in growing anarchy in the merger field, not only among the big boys but among the smaller fry as well. Four days before the year ended, the Dreyfus Corporation bought the Lincoln State Bank of East Orange, New Jersey. The price was a minuscule \$2.7 million, but the purchase was significant as an example of the Administration's encouragement of lawlessness. Dreyfus is a securities firm. Lincoln State Bank is a commercial bank. There's a Federal law that says securities firms and commercial banks must not mess around in each other's business. But the officials at the Federal Reserve Board and at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation who should have stopped the takeover did nothing.

Last September, in another instance of illegal acquisition activity in the banking world, Citicorp of New York bought the Fidelity Savings and Loan Association of California. Federal law prohibits banks from transferring their assets from the states in which they are chartered. That prohibition has long frustrated the big banks headquartered in New York City, which covet the fabulously rich California banking market. When the Fidelity Savings and Loan Association of California, which had assets of \$2.9 billion, failed, Citicorp gallantly offered to buy it, and on August 16 the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, willing to ignore the law, said O.K.

Another fertile field for corporate raiders has been the oil industry. The slump in oil prices has knocked the hell out of oil company stocks (many of which are selling for half the price they sold for two years ago), which has made the companies highly vulnerable. There have been a rash of takeovers, including Mesa Petroleum's of General American Oil and Burlington Northern's of El Paso Natural Gas. But the Federal Trade Commission, which handles most of the gov-

ernment's antitrust cases against oil companies, has been on record since last fall as opposing any legislation that would block such mergers.

So, with the Justice Department, the F.T.C., the S.E.C., the Treasury Department, the Fed, the F.D.I.C. and lesser agencies all flying the Jolly Roger, there is no one to protect consumers from the growing concentration of industrial power—a concentration which saw, between 1948 and 1979, the share of manufacturing assets held by the 200 largest companies increase from 48 percent to 59 percent. Will the Supreme Court move into the breach? Fat chance. Last year the Court ruled unconstitutional efforts by the states to regulate corporate takeovers. The case involved an Illinois law that required an out-of-state company attempting to take over a local corporation to register a tender offer with the Secretary of State, who could block the offer if he found it "inequitable." The Court held that the law placed an "excessive burden" on interstate commerce. And perhaps it did. But thirty-six states had similar laws, suggesting that quite a few people outside of Washington and New York are troubled by the current merger madness.

The acquisition plague is so rampant that the business press is growing critical. *Fortune* magazine called the Allied-Bendix-Martin Marietta-United Technologies war "quite preposterous," a prime example of "takeover mania." The investment bankers involved in that fiasco—First Boston, Lehman Brothers, Salomon Brothers, Kidder Peabody, Lazard Frères—did all right financially, pocketing an estimated \$20 million in fees, but some of them emerged from the affair with their reputations tarnished. They were "inept, overreaching or opportunistic," wrote Sandra Salmans in the business section of *The New York Times*, and "failed to foresee their opponents' strategy, miscalculated the impact of their own moves and carried on the takeover battle without worrying about casualties."

As always, the public was the main victim. At a time when money was scarce and therefore too high-priced for ordinary people to be able to buy homes or for owners of small businesses to be able to buy needed equipment, these giant corporations were monopolizing billions of dollars in their takeover games. Even some industrialists were outraged. As one admitted to *The Wall Street Journal*, "Maybe there's something wrong with our system when these four companies line up large amounts of money in order to purchase stock, when it doesn't help build one new factory, buy one more piece of equipment, or provide even one more job."

Edgar M. Bronfman, chairman of the Seagram Company, who is no virgin when it comes to mergers, wrote in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece that operations like the Allied-Bendix-et al. deal are a drain on the nation's limited supply of credit. They withdraw billions of dollars from the banking system, driving up the cost of money and thereby putting "a new home or a new car beyond the reach of the vast majority of potential buyers." Bronfman said the tax laws are rigged to encourage mergers: the interest on money borrowed by corporations specifically to buy the common stock of other corporations is tax deductible,

which means that "the average taxpayers . . . are now indirectly footing the bill for part of these corporate-takeover games." If this idiotic tax benefit were eliminated, he argued, "unfriendly takeovers would become discouragingly expensive and bank credit would not be used to enrich a few shareholders, discharged executives, arbitragers, lawyers and others without real benefit to the economy as a whole. Banks would have billions of dollars to lend more creatively, while the supply of credit would increase with a probable drop in interest rates." It's a swell idea, but Treasury tax czar Norman Ture was not heard seconding the motion.

A few months ago, Yale University economist William Nordhaus drew up a fictitious portfolio of the ten most acquisitive companies—"The Vulture Fund"—and calculated how their stocks fared on the market compared with the stocks of companies making up the Dow Jones Industrials and the Standard & Poor 500. If mergers are good for business, one would expect the companies in the Vulture Fund portfolio—Du Pont, U.S. Steel, Connecticut General, Seagram, Freeport Minerals, Fluor, Nabisco, Standard Oil of Ohio, Smith Kline and American Express, which had "bagged the biggest corporate game over the period from January 1981 to March 1982"—to have done very well indeed. On the contrary, Nordhaus wrote, Vulture Fund stocks fell "16.3 percent from the end of 1980 to September 1982." "This compares," he continued, "with a fall in the broad-gauged stock averages of only 4 percent to 9 percent over this period."

Obviously, the holders of Vulture Fund stocks were getting screwed; the mergers were proving to be extremely bad business. Therefore, Nordhaus suggested in an article in *The Times* on his experiment, why not allow stockholders to control mergers? "Interestingly," he wrote, "stockholders must approve many things, but acquisitions are left to the business judgment of managers. I would propose that any major acquisition be approved by a stockholder majority. The approval requirement would allow stockholders to protect themselves from imperial managers. Where an acquisition fails to serve any stockholder or public interest, as appears the case for the Vulture Fund, stockholders would simply overrule their directors." It's a good idea, but John Shad at the S.E.C. did not second the motion.

Let us remind ourselves that the difference between the merger and acquisition frenzy under the Reagan Administration and what happened under past administrations is a matter of degree. The history of the oil industry attests to that. Rarely has the Justice Department or the Federal Trade Commission seriously attempted to prevent the major oil companies from buying up their competitors. Never—not once—has the Justice Department filed an antitrust suit to block an oil company's purchase of a competitor such as a coal company, a uranium mine, a shale-oil producer or a solar energy company. Through mergers, oil companies have come to monopolize the fertilizer industry and have seized control of 55 percent of domestic copper mining.

These mergers took place under Democratic administrations as frequently as they did under Republican. In 1973, economist Walter Adams did a study of oil company ac-

quisitions from 1956 to 1968. During those years, the major oil companies consummated 226 mergers—including takeovers of twenty independent oil refining companies and fifty-two crude oil and natural gas production companies. For two thirds of that period, supposedly "liberal" Presidents were in the White House, but they did not use the Justice Department to combat what Adams calls "industrial imperialism."

Is there any hope that the concentration of economic power through mergers can be stopped, or slowed significantly? Certainly. There's always hope. But doing so will take more than just getting rid of Ronald Reagan. We can hope for real antitrust enforcement in the Sweet Bye and Bye of True Competition, when—in the description of economist Robert Lekachman:

The National Association of Manufacturers concedes that corporate giantism is bad, farmers cry out against Department of Agriculture subsidies; the American Medical Association insists that doctors be periodically examined for re-accreditation by boards that include public members; the American Bar Association sues to purge its roster of incompetent and dishonest members and ceases, after public apology for past misfeasance, to circulate minimum fee schedules; the American Association of University Professors, after careful scholarly evaluation, reveals that tenure damages faculty quality; politicians spontaneously agree to finance campaigns for *all* offices (not just presidential races) out of the small contributions of grateful constituents; defense contractors proudly proclaim that bankruptcy in the service of freedom is no shame; and the American public, no fools, conclude that there is now a genuine chance to make headway against the formidable conspiracies of the rich, powerful, and successful.

So it may take a couple of years. □



BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Was Our Face Red?

MAURICE ISSERMAN

A BETTER WORLD, THE GREAT SCHISM: Stalinism and the American Intellectuals. By William L. O'Neill. Simon and Schuster. 447 pp. \$17.95.

The August 26, 1939, *Nation* devoted its lead editorial to the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, announced earlier in the week. Since 1935, the unsigned editorial declared, "Soviet Russia had assumed the leadership of the anti-fascist front the world over":

It provided the one great hope that Germany might be rescued from the clutches of Hitler, and the rest of Europe avoid the fate of the Austrians and Czechs. And now it has timed this rapprochement with Nazism for the moment when Hitler will derive the greatest possible benefit from it. The disillusionment which will follow among the left . . . will be bitter.

That turned out to be an understatement.

This spring marks the fiftieth anniversary of Hitler's rise to power; two years from now will bring the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of the Popular Front; in six years we will reach the golden anniversary of the fateful meeting of Molotov and von Ribbentrop in Moscow. Editors love such dates, especially when the old passions still run high. Be prepared: the political battles of the 1930s are going to be re-fought on the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* for the remainder of the decade. In *A Better World*, William L. O'Neill, a professor of history at Rutgers University and the author of four previous works of solid scholarship, gives ample evidence that the bitterness evoked by Soviet actions in the 1930s has not dissipated in the half-century gone by.

This is an awkward moment. *The Nation* is the chief villain in *A Better World*. In O'Neill's view, not only was the magazine consistently wrong on the "Russian question"; it also displayed little or no capacity for coming to grips

with its errors: "Except when nursing grudges [*The Nation*] had almost no memory, the world being born anew in its pages every week." I am required by the full disclosure provision of the Fair Book Reviewing Standards Act of 1938 (an obscure piece of New Deal legislation) to state that I am a longtime subscriber to the villain in question, and have on several occasions received payment (of sorts) for writing in this space. An even more awkward confession: I think O'Neill is right. Or, to be more precise, he is not totally wrong. *The Nation* did not cover itself with glory in its treatment of Soviet affairs in the 1930s and 1940s. Many American radicals have yet to face up to the uncomfortable fact that they, or their predecessors on the left, apologized for the second most vicious system of political tyranny to appear in the twentieth century. Someday someone will write a book explaining how this happened. Unfortunately, *A Better World* tells us mostly how loathsome O'Neill found the task of reading through back issues of *The Nation* and like-minded publications.

O'Neill's sympathies and strategy are clear from the start. In the spring of 1939, Sidney Hook organized a group calling itself the Committee for Cultural Freedom, which released a statement denouncing both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany as totalitarian states. According to O'Neill, "To Hook's surprise, Freda Kirchwey [the editor] of *The Nation* attacked them for sinning against unity. Hook still thought of *The Nation* as an open forum of the liberal left. . . . Kirchwey's critique opened his eyes." Hook wrote to Kirchwey comparing her position to the official Communist Party line; O'Neill points out that the Communist newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, would subsequently join the attack on the committee's manifesto.

The exchange is presented from Hook's point of view and quotes only his words. (O'Neill takes Hook's "surprise" at Kirchwey's position at face value, but it does seem unlikely that a man of Hook's political sophistication and experience would not have had some premonition of how *The Nation* would respond.) O'Neill fails to mention that *The Nation* printed the committee's statement in full, something

The Daily Worker and, for that matter, *The New Republic* did not do. (Younger readers of *The New Republic* and *The Nation* might be surprised to learn that in the 1930s the former was somewhat to the left of the latter.) He also fails to quote a single word from Kirchwey's offending editorial. Let's turn to the record. In the issue of May 27, 1939, Kirchwey wrote:

This is a real issue and I am not going to charge redbaiting to those who feel as Mr. Hook does. The Communist Party is a nuisance or a menace to all its opponents . . . its tactics are provocative and often destructive.

Nevertheless, as she went on to say, she still believed in the spring of 1939 that there was good reason for Communists and non-Communist radicals to stand together against fascism. She may have been mistaken, and she did fail to address Hook's central point about the resemblance of the Soviet and Nazi political systems; but her response shows more thought and complexity than O'Neill's account suggests.

O'Neill's "progressives" are cardboard targets for his scorn. On his first page he writes that although the late 1930s were the years of the great purges and the Moscow trials, American progressive intellectuals were confident that "so forward-looking a regime [as the Soviet Union] would not be executing, among others, heroes of the Bolshevik revolution without good reason." He offers no citations, though he later makes passing reference to *The Nation*'s "rationalizations" of the purge trials. Going back to the record, we find a *Nation* editorial on March 12, 1938, declaring:

The trial of Bukharin . . . has broken about the ears of the world like the detonation of a bomb. One can hear the cracking of liberal hopes; of the dream of anti-fascist unity; of a whole system of revolutionary philosophy . . . when one looks at Bukharin's picture and reads his words, the whole past of the revolution clamors for defense and vindication. . . .

The editorial called the trials a "travesty of justice," but it made the mistake of assuming that there must be some kind of fire beneath all the smoke—perhaps a plot to dethrone Stalin. Still, the main point of the editorial was that Stalin had choked off all legitimate channels of dissent, and that the show trials were a

Maurice Isserman teaches history at Smith College. He is the author of *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Wesleyan).

"tragic spectacle." James K. Libby noted in an article in *Journalism Quarterly* a few years ago that *The Nation* and *The New Republic* were actually more critical of the Moscow trials than much of the American popular press. (*The New York Times* and *The Literary Digest* virtually parroted the Soviet prosecutor's charges that Trotsky was the mastermind behind a terrorist conspiracy.)

Let's look at one final example of O'Neill's method of selecting evidence. In the spring of 1943 the Soviet Union revealed that it had executed two Polish Jewish socialists, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, as Nazi agents. The charge was utterly untrue, and the Erlich-Alter case became a *cause célèbre* in the West. O'Neill argues that progressives minimized the importance of the case because they feared its impact on the future of the wartime Alliance. He cites an editorial in the April 12, 1943, *New Republic* that compared the Erlich-Alter case to the Sacco-Vanzetti case and comments that "the reasoning seemed to be that as the Allied nations had committed evils in the past, fresh ones by Russia made no difference." It turns out, though, that this was not *The New Republic's* first discussion of the executions. Two weeks earlier, in an editorial not mentioned by O'Neill, the editors argued:

It is time that we learned to know our ally, to recognize the consequences of his bad qualities as well as those of his good, and not allow our admiration for his fighting abilities to blind us to the problems his participation in the war creates. The announcement of the deaths of Erlich and Alter should take the scales from our eyes.

O'Neill has sifted through the historical record and found many quotations to illustrate his thesis that the progressive intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s were fools or knaves who worshipped blindly at the shrine of Soviet progress. By equally selective quoting, one could prove that *The Nation* and *The New Republic* had been unwavering critics of Soviet human rights abuses. Neither approach has much to recommend it.

O'Neill has written *A Better World* as a polemicist, not as a historian. He writes as if it were still 1939 or 1943 and it was his responsibility to nail each lie and half-truth he encountered in the editorial columns of the progressive weeklies. After a while one gets the feeling that he is thoroughly enjoying

himself as he bloodies Max Lerner for the nineteenth time ("Lerner had no peer when it came to knowing less and writing more about the Soviets"). This kind of exercise has more value as sport than as explanation. O'Neill seems to have a principled objection to mentioning the historical context (the rise of Nazism, the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War, the role of the Red Army in World War II)—a context which might make the progressive intellectuals' attraction to the Soviet Union more understandable. All of that he regards as merely a rationalization for the perfidy of the intellectuals.

Toward the end of the book he contrasts the behavior of Stalinists and anti-Stalinists in the intellectual wars of the 1940s and 1950s:

Anti-Stalinists made false statements, too, but seldom knowingly and therefore did not corrupt intellectual life. It was the progressives who subordinated truth and honesty to the "higher" needs of peace or socialism or whatever who did the most harm.

O'Neill has apparently found the key to the hidden secrets of the human heart: anti-Stalinists were good people who, when they made false statements, did so unknowingly; progressives were bad people who consciously chose to lie. How, one wonders, does he know? The battle of good versus evil is good melodrama, but it is questionable either as psychology or as history.

The real enemy of intellectual integrity in America in this century has been not Stalinism but instrumentalism. Stalinism was one episode in the American intellectuals' continuing love affair with a bastardized version of pragmatism. John Dewey's belief that the truth of ideas can be judged by their practical impact too easily metamorphosed into a habit of assigning different weights to different truths according to their immediate political usefulness. In 1917, *The New Republic* chose to see Woodrow Wilson's war as an experiment in democracy; the journal was greatly chagrined when the Versailles settlement proved this an illusion. *The New Republic* and *The Nation* chose to see Joseph Stalin's Russia as the most reliable opponent of fascism and as the (imperfect) guarantor of the socialist dream; in August 1939, the Stalin-Hitler Pact proved that this too was an illusion. As Christopher Lasch showed in a famous essay on the anti-Stalinist Congress for Cultural Freedom

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["The Cultural Cold War," *The Nation*, September 11, 1967]—an essay O'Neill dismisses as "silly"—those who "chose the west" in the cold war were part of the same instrumentalist tradition as the fellow travelers they despised. Wilsonian, Stalinist and anti-Stalinist intellectuals alike have been guilty of adjusting facts to fit their shifting perception of

political realities in a continuing quest for "a better world."

Progressive intellectuals of the 1930s were neither heroes nor villains. They should be held responsible for the illusions they shared and promoted, but they deserve fairer treatment than the selective retribution O'Neill visits upon them. □

The Kids Are All Right

FREDERIKA RANDALL

GETTING UP: Subway Graffiti in New York. By Craig Castleman. M.I.T. Press. 164 pp. \$15.

STREET MURALS. By Volker Barthelmeh. Alfred A. Knopf. 120 pp. \$20. Paper \$11.95.

On the night of July 4, 1976, three subway graffitiists by the names of Caine, Mad 103 and Flame One climbed over a fence into New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority Number 7 train yard. Armed with dozens of cans of Red Devil spray paint in mostly patriotic colors, they produced a Bicentennial work they called The Freedom Train: an eleven-car train painted top to bottom and end to end in variations on the American flag.

As morning dawned on the third century of the United States of America, the M.T.A. responded swiftly to this threat to the domestic tranquillity. The Freedom Train was immediately taken out of service, photographed by the Transit Police, uncoupled and sidelined; eventually it would be repainted and returned to the line wearing less subversive colors. Caine, Mad and Flame were picked up by the police the following day. "They did something for the United States," commented another graffitiist, Lee of the Fabulous Five, "and somebody dropped a dime on them and they busted them."

People with big ambitions appeal to those of us who cherish more modest hopes. During their fifteen-year contest with the City of New York, the graffitiists (their term is *writers*) have won many hearts. We who scuttle through the subway to work, whose signature is usually confined to a two-inch scrawl

on the back of a paycheck, can't help responding to the lunatic audacity of a six-foot-high signature on the side of a subway car. Every time it announces a new campaign against graffiti, the M.T.A., with its shabbily maintained stations and trains and its monotonous "punish the vandals" philosophy, looks more and more like a decrepit, tottering regime. If we had to pin our chances on one side or the other, we'd surely bet on the punks with the spray cans.

What, then, do the punks have to offer? Craig Castleman's modest, non-judgmental study steers clear of opinions about the political meaning or artistic merit of subway graffiti, but the author's sympathies come through clearly: the kids are all right. In interviews with the wonderful listener they found in Castleman, the graffitiists don't talk the language of guerrilla war or "fugitive art," as have their journalist and art-critic admirers. They talk like good kids—good to a fault. In fact, what's surprising and a little distressing about the graffitiists is their ready acceptance of the limited ideas and materials of conventional American culture.

Here is Stan 153, describing his first visit to The Coffee Shop, an early 1970s hangout for writers near DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. After a few tries at introducing himself to some famous writers, who put him down with a "Stan Who?," he finally engages the attention of T-Rex 131:

which was a guy that was about six foot five, which made me feel like a shrimp. I said, "You're the great T-Rex, right?" And he said, "Yes, I'm the great T-Rex." And I said, "Please, Mister, would you sign my book?" And he said, "Shuurre." And this giant hand came down and picked [the notebook] up and gave me an original T-Rex.

It's a nice, un-self-conscious homage that takes its shape from comic

books, perhaps, in this case, Classic Comics. The great writer is the guy who towers over other people: he takes up space. His gift is the literal one of giant proportions and his achievement is that he "gets up" a lot—he has put his signature on many trains.

Afterward, Stan relates, he went downtown with some of the guys to the IRT station at 96th Street and Broadway to "spot" trains on the Number 3 line. In about half an hour a car came by with "Stan 153" on it. "Okay," the guys said. "You can hang out."

"I'm accepted," Stan thought to himself. "The Bronx people accept me!" He was on his way in a world in which greatness is measured by how many people know your name.

Fred, a writer with the Hellcats, a Bedford-Stuyvesant gang, remembers his glory days: "A famous writer could go into any area of Brooklyn and get respect." Respect: it's Al Pacino in *The Godfather*, or any of a long line of movie outlaws who crave to be treated with courtesy by legitimate society.

Stature, fame, respect: in their aspirations and their style the graffitiists are sincere consumers of the hodgepodge of real and fake sentiments that come to us in movies, TV and advertisements. Their bubble letters remind us of bubblegum. The writer's signature, his "tag," is the equivalent of a brand name. Sometimes the sentiments belong to greeting cards ("To Mom"); sometimes they're a little more adventurous, like the "Stop the Bomb—Man is Almost Extinct" whole-car design painted by Lee of the Fabulous Five, or The Freedom Train, whose stars and stripes may have been hackneyed but whose exuberance rang true. There is also a lot of the worst of Walt Disney: Mickey Mouse, trolls, skulls and crossbones. There's even hype, as in the case of a blurb on the bottom of a design that reads: "United Artists presents another Master Blaster production in Out Ta Bomb © all rights reserved."

Subway graffitiists are not trying to offer a parody of high art or a post-modernist collage assembled from the dregs of junk culture. The writers in *Getting Up* take themselves as seriously as possible, considering how unseriously society takes them. They spend hours sketching designs, weeks plotting their painting expeditions. Yet all their energy and discipline is inevitably trivialized by the unpromising nature of midnight raids on subway yards as a means of expression.

Frederika Randall is a former urban planner turned editor and book reviewer.

In providing free decorations for the M.T.A. over the years, the graffitiists have raised an interesting question: Why are the subways, the working person's mode of transportation, so grim, so derelict, so discouraging? If the clamor of names and scrawls contributes to the atmosphere of discouragement, one only has to look around to see that the city's efforts to improve the situation are much less imaginative than those of the writers. The stations are dirty and littered. The battered trains come down the line splattered with mud and grime, their graffiti even less inviting for being half-scoured off.

Instead of clean platforms, we get a garbled voice over a public-address system advising us to put garbage into "waste receptacles." Instead of designing attractive stations, the M.T.A. focuses blame on graffitiists. Yet its tactic of defacing and erasing graffiti has been a resounding failure. A better strategy would be graffiti enhancement: a public competition to paint the subways. Sponsored graffiti wouldn't resemble the outlaw kind, since the style and content of what we see now is partly dictated by the illicit nature of the activity. The graffitiists dream of whole trains painted to look like loaves of Wonder Bread—why not give them the chance to dream on?

What they might come up with is suggested by Volker Barthelmeh's collection of color photos of outdoor murals from cities in the United States and Europe. These include *trompe l'oeil* vistas (a Venice, California, parking lot opens out into a mountain view); Pop effects (a giant zipper fastens together the top and bottom of a Fort Worth, Texas, wall); earnest expressions of community purpose featuring clenched fists and political slogans (Berkeley, California, seems to specialize in these); idiosyncratic decoration (one German miner painted his modest house inside and out with minutely detailed flowers, birds and animals); painterly irony (a mural titled "Hippie Knowhow" at Vincennes near Paris depicts two veterans of 1968 falling off their painter's scaffold in front of a classically rendered wall). *Street Murals* suggests some of the complex things the graffitiists might do given better working conditions and broader esthetic horizons.

It's a mixed collection—any one person looking at these photographs is bound to detest about three quarters of them. The brief notes accompanying the pictures don't tell the stories of neigh-

borhood outrage or local pride such projects always generate, for there is hardly anything more contentious than public art. Still, efforts to convert the

drab blank spots of cities into fantasy, polemic, visual humor and social comment seem happy contributions to our dolorous public spaces. □

The Wise Woman of Dorset

RICHARD HOWARD

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER: *LETTERS*. Edited by William Maxwell. Viking Press. 311 pp. \$26.

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER: *COLLECTED POEMS*. Edited by Claire Harman. Viking Press. 274 pp. \$26.

She has no critical cachet whatever, this writer. Her fifteen volumes of fiction are not examined in studies of the modern English novel—even *Mr. Fortune's Maggot* (1927) fails to appear in bibliographies of gay writing, though it is, with Stein's *Things As They Are*, the most passionate homosexual novel I know. She is not "taught," and I have never heard her mentioned on those occasions when poets are "ranked." Women's studies have neglected her, too, though her status among the serenely Sapphic householders is irreproachable: whenever she and Valentine Ackland were separated, William Maxwell tells us in his tactful but explicit introduction, they wrote each other at the beginning and end of every day, and "these letters, love letters, were preserved. After Ackland's death, Warner put them in the proper sequence and had them transcribed and wrote an introduction and connecting narratives, all with the idea that they should some day be published." That day has not come, and we must wait as well for the untranscribed journal which runs, Maxwell says—though *brims* is surely the word—through forty notebooks. The letters published are but a selection, but even this chastened showing gives us enough to declare her among the finest letter writers in the language, one who must be included in the three-centuries-long strand linking (to mention only women, who for obvious reasons prevail in this genre) Dorothy Osborne to Virginia Woolf.

Born in 1893 and educated at home by intellectual parents, Warner believed

Richard Howard's eighth volume of poems, Lining Up, will be published next year by Atheneum.

herself to be first of all a musician; had it not been for the outbreak of World War I, she would have gone to Vienna to study with Schönberg. As it was, she became a musicologist and worked for many years on that monumental effort of English musical scholarship, *Tudor Church Music* (1922-29). At the other end of her 84-year life, she became both a translator (of Proust's critical writings, her preface to which is among the indispensable texts on that author) and a biographer (of T.H. White, a labor that involved her with Arthurian romance and, perhaps, stimulated her to that late flowering, *Kingdoms of Elfin*, crystalline tales as authoritative as Dinesen's, and as alien).

Meanwhile, without paying much attention to the literary scene—though she was close to David Garnett and T.F. Powys, was a niece of Arthur Machen and was represented in Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*—she wrote her poems and fictions. I suspect the point of the poetry would be considerably sharpened if we did not know the prose to be so masterful and so attractive: it is difficult to believe that even this great quantity of verse is more than a second string to her bow. But this is not the case; Warner is a poet of great and consistent achievement. Our difficulty is with the *mode* of her verse rather than with its amount. She is not a modernist, and her fashion is not our fashion; ease, profusion, recurrent pattern and confidence in natural presences are *démodé* among us, and what we admire in Crabbe and Edward Thomas, in Hardy and de la Mare, we find suspect in a writer still active (till 1980!) among us, a writer who would rather be interesting than excruciating, who prefers centers to edges, meetings to Sunderings, who chooses not so much to anatomize a state as to fix a vision. It is just because Warner is so willingly observant of the household bonds of life that she so often rises above them, sustained and even stimulated by her old-fashioned methods, as I am happy to call them:

Sea-winds blew there,
Sea-birds flew there,
Nothing grew there

Save the inherent tares of barren
ground;
Grasses shrivelled and stiff,
And frantic thistles scattering their
seed.
Claw-rooted was each necessitous
weed

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And salt to the taste,
For the blown rack groped over the
waste,
And evermore the sea with a tram-
pling sound
Beleaguered the cliff.

("Peeping Tom")

Charms, hex signs, incantations and runes—the poems are the deliberate mutterings of the Wise Woman of Dorset, and they keep faith with the 8-year-old who sat on the stairs, as Warner recalls in one letter, reading aloud spells for raising the Devil from Mackay's *Popular Delusions* to her black cat and "feeling a black hope that they would work."

Perhaps the best ingress into this somewhat daunting body of work is her "Seven Conjectural Readings," lyric monologues in which figures from myth and history who bear an oblique relation to the story give us *their* version—John Donne's wife, Madame de Sévigné's son-in-law. Here is the end of "Lady Macbeth's Daughter":

The castle walls are slighted down,
The pretty martlets all are flown,
My beads were scattered in the fray,
The king's son stole my relic away.
Barefoot I trudge through mire and
sleet

To gather nettles for my meat
And the poor's curses rattle after
Poor me, that am my father's and my
mother's daughter.

Another triumph is "Five British Water Colours" (1947), in which landscapes from Thomas the Rhymer's heath to Dickens's hearth become the sacred places, the secret plots which generate a thousand years of English country life.

What makes the poems and the letters part of the same energy, the same perception, is Warner's trust that myth and autobiography may be observed in one and the same life, her own for instance. The letters give off the same shadowy sense one has about Hardy's life—that it is accompanied by an incomprehensible nightmare we can know only by allusion and reflection. Hardy's Emma and Warner's Valentine are both impossible enigmas—Valentine leads Sylvia into the Communist Party in 1934, leaves her for another, returns to their life together, tries but fails to drag her into the Catholic Church in the 1940s—yet none of this is directly recounted. What we must read these letters for, beyond the divination of a life story and the skeleton of a Great Romance, is the rapturous quotidian: the sound of owls in the garden ("they expressed themselves in brief tinny exclamations, very much as if they were striking small cheap triangles"), Byron, a conversation with Peggy Ashcroft about Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, *The New Yorker's* prudery. It is not miscellany, though; it is order, for these letters are the crystallization of a trained mind, of a hand and eye that have learned to work together. The last letter, written when she was 84, characteristically insists on an artist's gift for observation (in this case, Van Eyck's) rather than on his adherence to mere symbol: "The dog may be an emblem of fidelity, but, I think, it is just an expression of dog's (lady's dog) habit for being in the foreground. Just such a dog walks past on the opposite bank every morning, taking its gentleman for a constitutional. The *gentleman* is an expression of fidelity. His sneeze rings out over the drenched meadow."

I cannot agree with Maxwell that to have indexed the letters would have been "like indexing life itself." This is not charm, this is not chaos, but a commanding intuition of *how to live*, and even in collecting samples for this review, I am bewildered where I might have been tidy. Warner is the kind of authority one wants to be able to cite

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without having to leaf through hundreds of pages. Take this precious observation of G.B.S., for instance: "I remember a dress rehearsal of *Heartbreak House* when Shaw bounded onto the stage and became a young girl. He was infinitely better at it than the actress,

even when she had studied him, he far out-girled her. He had a tirra-lirra twirl of the waist that I went home and practised by the hour. I couldn't do it either." That goes under "S" in the index I am making for these life-enhancing letters, unless it goes under "G." ☐

K-Marts and Failing Farms

PATRICIA VIGDERMAN

SHILOH AND OTHER STORIES. By Bobbie Ann Mason. Harper & Row. 247 pp. \$12.95.

THE STORIES OF BREECE D'J PANCAKE. Foreword by James Alan McPherson. Afterword by John Casey. Atlantic-Little, Brown. 178 pp. \$13.50.

Bobbie Ann Mason's book of sixteen short stories has been treated to a remarkable amount of favorable critical attention for a first collection, and indeed her appeal is undeniable. The first lines pull you in with an easy, quirky rhythm: "The former astronaut claims that walking on the moon was nothing, compared to walking with Jesus." Every story is rich with surface details, little pleasures and pains captured absolutely, of the everyday life of future shock in the provinces. Mason has really heard people speak the way her characters speak, and she has certainly watched the TV shows they watch.

When you turn the page, however, her people vanish, because their stories have no emotional gravity. Mason establishes an energetic comic distance, and then ends the stories with a little lurch of the heart, a closeness that seems tacked on. In "Old Things," for example, Mason presents Cleo, a middle-aged Kentucky widow, from many angles. Cleo is a likable person who lives in a small house where the TV is almost always on. Her daughter Linda, who has left her husband, has moved in, along with her two young children. The kids are making a mess of the place, and Cleo can't believe Linda's husband has mistreated her: "It's as if she had been told some wild tale about outer space, like something on a TV show." She's uncomfortable about the way Linda seems to be enjoying her life now. It's all so newfangled the way people just do what they want.

Patricia Vigderman is managing editor of Working Papers.

We see Cleo looking idly through a mail-order catalogue, talking to her granddaughter, grieving over the impending death of a friend's cat. But we never get close to her. *She's* like somebody from outer space—until the very end, when at a flea market she comes across a miniature whatnot with an idyllic train scene painted across the front. She is sure it once belonged to her husband, and the story ends in a zoom close-up of Cleo fantasizing the family all together on the train, gliding west into a perfect future.

Like most of Mason's characters, Cleo is not long off the land, and she is completely vulnerable to contemporary American culture. This vulnerability of Mason's New Southerners is never quite integrated into the plots, however. It's used—often with great humor—as local color, but the inner life it implies is not deeply imagined. Mason takes us into her characters' new Kentucky homes and then runs a made-for-TV movie. Her people's emotions come across merely as dots on the screen. Ultimately, the stories seem idle: "Old Things" ends for no particular reason, which makes it seem to have been written likewise. This aimlessness is not unique to Mason, of course. It characterizes much of what passes for good fiction right now—but it disappoints all the same.

It's all the more exciting, therefore, to turn to *The Stories of Breece D'J Pancake*, for here is fiction that offers the deep pleasure of art created out of the need to transform suffering. Four years ago, before he was quite 27, Pancake killed himself. These twelve stories are all we will ever have from him, but they may well be read for generations to come.

While Mason's characters are sociological types, Pancake's are individuals who act out of the kinds of necessity present in our own lives. We are not tourists in his fiction, but residents. Pancake's characters, like Mason's,

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belong to rural America. Mason's territory, though, is a gentle Kentucky, overrun by K-Marts and Datsun dealerships; Pancake's is West Virginia—hard, rocky and infertile, carved out of land five other states didn't want. From this damp and chilly landscape, from failing farms and young men who leave them to work as miners or truckdrivers or gas-station attendants, Pancake creates stories that are as carefully (and wittily) observed as any of Mason's. For him, however, the social and family dramas, the inescapable situations, are not simply performances. As in classic tragedy, his heroes' failures affirm the absolute value of what they've lost.

Colly, the hero of "Trilobites," has collected rocks and fossils since childhood. He has lived all his life on his father's farm, but he has no talent for farming ("Couldn't grow pole beans in a pile of horseshit," he says to himself). He is connected to the land by his passion for its geological secrets. Colly's father is dead, his mother is about to sell the farm to a developer and move to Ohio, and his emotional grounding has been shaken loose.

Part of Colly's desperation is his disappointed love for Ginny, who helped him hunt for fossils when they were children, who was his lover in high school and whom he had expected to love forever. Home on a visit from her Florida college, Ginny is bored, restless. She seems false—"talking through her

beak," Colly calls it. She hardly remembers how close they used to be.

Pancake's language brings Colly alive; we join him in his loneliness. Wading into the creek at the edge of the farm, Colly thinks, "I have only the bottoms and the stone animals I collect. I blink and breathe. My father is a khaki cloud in the canebrakes, and Ginny is no more to me than the bitter smell in the blackberry briars up on the ridge."

Colly's isolation does not collapse into a meaningless alienation. His decision at the end of the story to become a railroad bum is a *decision*, not a sad fade-out. Hedged all around by circumstance, Colly is not a victim of circumstance.

This ability to choose Pancake gives to all his characters, even in the bleakest story, "First Day of Winter," in which the protagonist, Hollis, accepts a kind of living death as the caretaker of his aging parents. Although Hollis's despair is absolute, he is also the man who provides the squirrel meat for Thanksgiving dinner, and his fate does not appear to be out of his own hands. Like tragic heroes, when Pancake's characters can't choose anything else, they choose their own losses.

In "The Mark," Reva is in love with her brother, Clinton. Their parents died in a river accident when they were children, and now Reva is married and Clinton has gone away to work on the river. Reva's husband is eager for her to

become pregnant; he hopes it will make her less odd. The story takes place on a summer day, as—to Reva's relief—her body is rejecting that possibility. Halfway through the story, she is standing with her sister-in-law, Carlene, outside a sideshow at the county fair:

"Bill said she smokes a cigar with her you-know-what," Carlene whispered.

"Now there's a trick," Reva answered. Her face lightened thinking about it. Her brother would come upriver, not in his boatman's clothes, but as a naked Indian hiding in the pawpaw tunnels. In the lockhouse she would show him that trick. Her mood shifted back when she thought some whore might already have shown him.

Pancake's stories take place in a country where men kill animals and fight each other. They expect to have blood on their hands, and they expect women to bear children. It is a measure of his seriousness that Pancake's own consciousness is not befuddled by his material. Only "The Mark" has a woman as the main character, but she is solidly at the center. In the end, the weight of Reva's sorrow makes the same claim on our hearts as Colly's, and she too chooses her loss, burning down the lockhouse, the private life of her childhood.

The stories are all sad, yet they are not heavy or gloomy because we are always aware of the pleasure Pancake takes in their details. The real art of these stories is in the counterpoint between Pancake's intimacy with his characters and the almost playful detachment of his description. Reva watches a man at the fair who swallows snakes for a living. Colly lets a little turtle blood spray on the developer's pants. "The Salvation of Me" begins: "Chester was smarter than any shithouse mouse because Chester got out before the shit began to fall," and continues in a fast comic idiom to tell the story of a kid whose dreams evaporate and who ends up pumping gas instead of getting out.

Pancake's stories are undecorated, but they have plenty of room to notice the way a piece of land dries out in the summer and the way a field looks after frost; how a crippled man sits in a wheelchair with his hands bunched in his lap; or how it feels to scrape your knuckles under the hood of a car in the cold. They are attentive to the way headlights in the dark show up the highway steam, "making the road give birth to little ghosts beneath his feet." Because we know we can trust Pancake

FISH-FEEDING AT HAUNAMA BAY

Least vain of beauties, still knives in waters,
they cut through *politesse*
to snatch the bread from our hands.
Waist-deep, on unsteady legs, buoyant, we are able
to call them in with grace
on the surface, and when the bread we let go
leaves our fingers it drifts a moment unassigned,
then meets the jaws of a new living
and the surface breaks and the fed fish descends.

We have to do this hundreds of times
to see the fish feed. They could be coming
or going, fed or feeding, about to or
not about to: the advantage. One brushes my leg

What kind of fish was that?—Gone.
In the waters around these islands,
the farming is good—these fish won't leave
this rainbow bay, and the world needs a few places
like this, where escape is easy.
They are beautiful,
but there's more to them. They can be hungry, sometimes.

Marvin Bell

on these and hundreds of other details, we trust him not to abandon us in the dark forest of his characters' inner lives. □

THEATER.

RICHARD GILMAN

Tennessee Williams

I remember walking out of a Broadway theater one night about twenty years ago and smiling ruefully at a remark by one of my colleagues: "The gravy train doesn't stop here anymore." We'd been to the second night of *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, and it was clear to us that Williams was in flight from his own powers, that he was in fact beginning to parody them.

From then on the decline was rapid. I remember another night at the end of the 1960s when another colleague, Harold Clurman, and I looked at each other sadly and without speaking during the intermission of a greatly embarrassing play by Williams called *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*. He continued to write; the work continued to be embarrassing. After a while you had to make an effort to summon up memories of the excitement you once felt at the prospect of a new Williams play. I make the effort now.

If you don't know what the American theater was like when he first came into it, you can't know what he meant to so many of us. From the beginning he was an original, not simply a more "talented" writer than his contemporaries but a different breed, an artist where the others were craftsmen. We used to joke about his name, wondering why he didn't call himself "Alabama" or "Mississippi," but we understood the exotic edge he sought to gain through that place name. He didn't need it; he was exotic from the start. In the bloodless, "liberal," cautious atmosphere of American drama, the Southern wildness, the sexual perversities and ferocities, the dangerous quality of what he dreamed gave his plays heat; their mingling of corruption and emotional accuracy touched us far more deeply than did any "reasonable" American drama.

The accepted masterpieces are solidly in my memory, and I admire them as much as ever—*A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*,

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The Rose Tattoo, perhaps *Sweet Bird of Youth*. But as I think back, I remember most fondly smaller, perhaps "lesser" plays of his, especially *Suddenly Last Summer* and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, the earlier, better version of *Summer and Smoke*.

The history of those two plays, like the history of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, is extremely revealing of Williams's peculiar morale. Apart from his notable hypochondria, his mad self-dramatization before the idea of death (it was as though he thought himself the *only* person slated to die), there was something else painful to know about him, painful in relation to American theater and culture generally.

For all his flamboyance and cunning egotism, he was wild with self-doubt. That might have been justified in the later years and in fact helps account for his desperate return to the theater year after year with inferior plays. But it certainly wasn't justified when, at the height of his powers, he sabotaged himself over and over in attempts to please friends and placate detractors.

He wrote *Summer and Smoke* because *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* had been criticized by someone or other as not "theatrical" enough; later, plaintively, he published both texts, remarking that he preferred the earlier version because it was "less conventional and melodramatic," and he asked the reader to judge. He was right. In a similar vein, he substantially rewrote *The Night of the Iguana* after it had opened in Chicago and had been berated by Claudia Cassiday, gossip columnist and drama critic (!) for a Chicago paper.

Perhaps worst of all, he allowed Elia Kazan, who had directed his early successes, to persuade him to seriously injure *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Kazan convinced him that he couldn't let the

character of Big Daddy drop out of the play early in the second act, since the part was being played by a star, Burl Ives, and the audience would resent his absence. Williams meekly wrote Big Daddy back into the script, then some years later again published both versions, soliciting the reader's opinion. Kazan might have been commercially astute but Williams had been artistically right.

There are more such stories I could tell, most of them common, if not public, knowledge. For all his éclat, Williams was perpetually embattled with the theater; he was better than it deserved or knew what to do with. It's a commonplace to say that the theater exists on a boom-or-bust mentality, but it's nonetheless true, and Williams was one of its exemplary victims. The theater praises its practitioners too soon, too much and too indiscriminately, and infects everyone with the mad itch for smash hits. For a dramatist to sustain an artistic career, as distinguished from a merely commercial one, isn't easy.

Well, Williams, who believed *everything* that was said about him, is dead now, and things begin to sort themselves out. Some years ago several students of mine called on him in Key West. It was a pilgrimage. They revered his earlier work and had the crazy idea they could persuade him that he didn't have to prove himself anymore, that the love they and others felt for him wasn't going to leak away. You really don't have to write anymore, they told him; you've already given us more than anybody. He was grateful, pleased, disturbed and defensive. He fed them and sent them on their way. As I say, their notion was absurd from a worldly point of view. Still, it's what *I* would have wanted to tell him, and what I want to tell him now: You gave us more than anyone else. □

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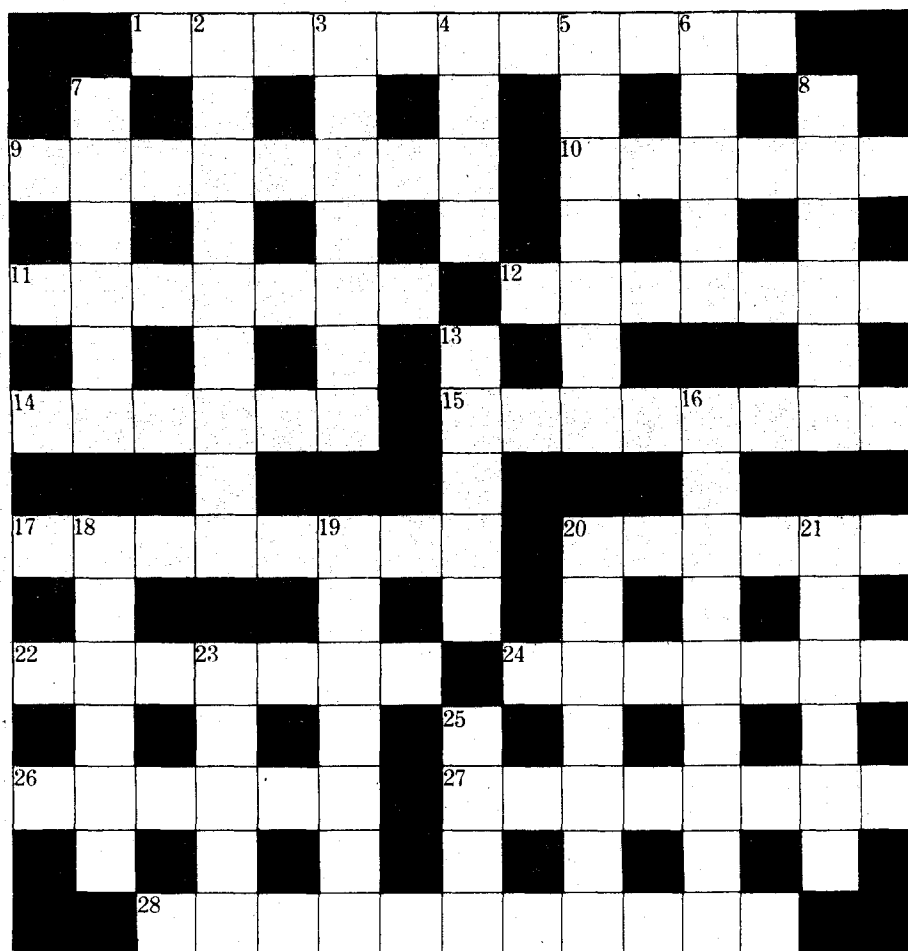
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O	P	E	N	F	I	R	E	A	N	D	O	U	T
V	T	L	E	S	N	T	A						
E	G	O	T	I	S	T	T	W	I	N	G	E	S
E	N	E	T	A	A	U	T						
S	E	N	S	E	O	F	B	A	L	A	N	C	E

LOCAL ONE
PHOTOGRAPHY
X-523

Crossword Puzzle No. 1954

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

- 1 See 25 down
- 9 A bad fit inside the steeple, but just made for a well-known fighter. (4-4)
- 10 What Moses crossed the other way around? It's burnt here! (6)
- 11 Not a very effective weapon, but it might help to wrap things up. (3,4)
- 12 and 26 Evidently all the ship's storage places don't have gratings, which implies that anything goes. (2,5,6)
- 14 Like an entrance inside showing semi-precious stones. (6)
- 15 Indicated as being without the article charged. (8)
- 17 Paid, in short, about the current rate, which is given too much attention, perhaps. (8)
- 20 See 25 down
- 22 Makes something look like Venus in one representation, and makes things very friendly. (7)
- 24 Took advantage of her inside—you can get led this way! (7)
- 26 See 12
- 27 What gets hit on the head and put away for reference? (It might be applied to what scratches.) (4,4)
- 28 The instrument that's not the first and not the second—proving you lose something in the translation! (7,4)

DOWN

- 2 Marching to a Different Drummer? That's one way to make pets! (3,2,4)
- 3 What are the fairies? Scotch, for example? (7)
- 4 You might be said to be alert when on your own. (4)
- 5 One way to duck a suit? (7)
- 6 Love poetry? Muse over it! (5)
- 7 See 25
- 8 Bumble, for example. (Be a badly led organization, otherwise.) (6)
- 13 Anything said to be for them may not be highly thought of. (Pies, for example.) (5)
- 16 Expected or demanded, as your laundry might be. (6,3)
- 18 Armadillo, for example, with a thin plate raised. (6)
- 19 Concerning one that might sit, it makes me older. (Change for the better, if you do!) (7)
- 20 Showing some irritability, you might have a desire to be around a snake! (7)
- 21 How certain covenants were supposed to be arrived at. (6)
- 23 Rod has an association with him. (5)
- 25 20 across, 1 across and 7 down Implying a little drink won't make you jump in the air—or you need more than a single example? (3,7,6,4,1,6)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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